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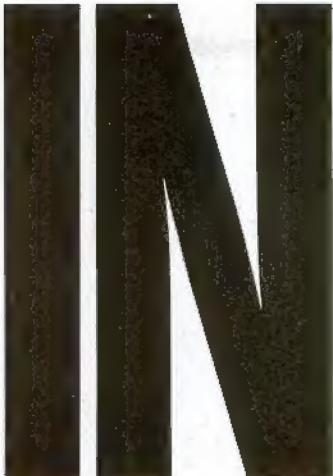
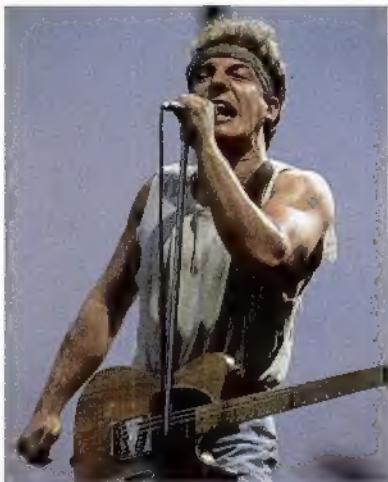


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Volume One Number Seven

November 1985

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Senior Editor: Richard Gehr
Senior Editor: Glenn O'Brien
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Cover photograph by Armando Gallo

Photograph above by Paul Natkin

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TOP SPIN

Who's Who, What's What, and Why

The key to understanding Bruce Springsteen is that he so profoundly captures the essence of the people he writes about in his songs because he is one of them. He doesn't just champion the losers and the boardwalk dreamers, he remains one himself.

We make a mistake with him—we keep looking for and insisting on his being a rock star. We are perplexed because, although we know he doesn't disappoint us, we are disappointed. He refuses canonization. The bottom line on Bruce Springsteen is his sincerity is sincere.

So perhaps the *real* phenomenon is how he manages to remain a person so allegedly down-to-earth and disinterested in celebrity that the mostly adoring media are at times frustrated into parodying the very all-American patriotic values they normally gush less convincingly in their own editorials.

Most stars reach a dizzying point of success where they develop some sort of contempt for their audience. This, I believe, is because the audience cheats the star out of his or her dreams—there is nothing the star can fantasize that the audience isn't already trying to deliver. Springsteen diffuses that deprivation by not accepting the glittering prize of celebrity. He is hardly anonymous, but by sticking to simple values he keeps his ability to dream.

The time will come, if it hasn't already, when high school teachers will ask their students to write essays about Springsteen, not because they numbly recognize his popularity, but acutely realize his importance. Which is that of all great poets—he's not important. It's the poet's work, freed of his identity, that is.

This issue marks the debut of several writers in SPIN—Quincy Troupe, who has written a phenomenally long but vibrant two-part article on Miles Davis (first part: page 72); Shelly da Cunha, who wrote about guitar band the Unforgiven (page 54); and Richard Meltzer, Tama Janowitz, Amiri Baraka, and Rich Stim, who were four of the seven essayists in our cover story on Springsteen (page 44).

This issue also marks the debut of Eric King, which came about in an unusual way.

The first time I met him and we shook hands, I thought he had in his palm one of those joke handshake buzzers that gives an electric shock, and that his had a battery that was low, so instead of being zapped, all I received was a strange, moderately trembling paw, not far above which grinned and

grimaced an ancient face composed of a thousand lines, each one suggesting it marked an individual birthday. And I swore it seemed his tiny, furiously and economically condensed body vibrated in pathetic unison with what I presumed to be his backfiring toy. But when our hands separated I saw his was empty.

I don't remember who recommended him to us, but he wanted to write for the magazine. We talked about writers—he had known some of the greats. "Sadly, sadly gone" he said about Hemingway, Dos Passos, Steinbeck. I asked him if he had known Aristotle, and he pondered this a while before answering that no, he didn't think so. We talked about rock—an attempt by me to bring our strange meeting down a verbal cul-de-sac and thus to an end, but again his interest surprised me: he gripped my desk with one hand and whacked the table top with the thin fingers of the other, proclaiming, "Young people's music, yes, young people's music!" and naming a jumbled but recognizable list to make sure we were both talking about the same thing. He was perched at the extreme edge of his chair now and quite excited and I was afraid he was going to fall off.

As he rose to leave, he handed me some of his clippings to read. The only solid piece of paper amongst these relics was an eclectic resume, which announced that he lived on West 14th Street and his hobby was darts.

I did not think much about him again until one dying summer evening, wandering crestfallen from a failed romance and not wanting to talk to either friends or complete strangers, I called him. The telephone exaggerated the agitated thinness of his voice, and the sound, which was like a leaking faucet, threw me. I meant to ask if he would like to join me for a drink but instead asked if he wanted to play darts.

So I went to his apartment, a single room practically arranged and insufficiently lit. He scurried over to the wall and hoisted onto a hook his dartboard, flicking on a powerful spotlight so that the pristine target glowed like a godhead in that indentured gloom. To the tinny, wheezing accompaniment of an earnest but mostly ineffectual air conditioner, we played darts. Our games were close, improbably close, each won by the margin of a single throw's score. This went on deep into the night, and I contend that his overall triumph of 19 games to 18 was at least influenced by his poisoning me at around the 34th game with a drink of allegedly Japanese vodka that has a dead lizard for



company in its bottle. He cemented the effect of the drink by waving the bottle in my face one game later, so that I might see for myself the harmony in which spiteful liquid and deceased lizard coexisted.

But I digress! A week later, as we were preparing our Springsteen article, I nominated my new friend as one of our essayists. Since I didn't have the phone number at hand, I asked someone to look it up in the phone book and contact him.

Whereas there can't be two such Eric Kings as I know in the universe, there are apparently two Eric Kings on West 14th Street. The second is a young man who walked into my office and gave me his piece on the Boss.

Stunned, I sputtered, "Is this from your father? Your grandfather? Your great-great-grandfather—?"

"Well, it's my first effort for you, but I wish you'd read it before you condemn it," replied this Eric King, hurt.

And that is how we found a new writer. Publishing is strange.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

Top: Glenn O'Brien, in a field of his own. In this issue he wrote nearly everything. Above left: Miles Davis. Above right: Laura Levine, one of SPIN's star photographers.

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**THE TAPE FOR
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POINT BLANK

Letters

Edited by Karen Dolan

Dear Spin:

Judging by your letters page, I'd say y'all are offending a lot of people. I guess that means you're doing somethin' right.

Steve Casimiro
Arlington, VA

I regularly purchase SPIN, primarily for the Underground section. I picked up the August issue only to find an article on some asinine "new music genre" called cowpunk. Cowpunk?

Punk is not merely music, but a philosophy exemplified by a distinct way of life. A local Pittsburgh hardcore band, "Half Life," put it well: "What's it mean to you? Is it just a fashion—no / What's it mean to you? Is it a way of life—yes / What's it mean to you? Is it just a social scene—no."

I have a feeling this cow shit is simply bad rock 'n' roll with a country accent.

Binky Frank
Pittsburgh, PA

Lydia Lunch has got to be the most arrogant bitch around! In "Lunch With Benatar" (September), Pat Benatar told exactly what she thought. Which is the way it should be! Then Lydia Lunch throws in every asinine comment her little—very little—brain can come up with. And as if that isn't enough, at the end of the article Lunch dives head first into self-righteous bullshit.

Joe Paladino
Houston, TX

Speaking of the August issue, I believed Fayette Hickox when she said getting answers from Curt Kirkwood of the Meat Puppets is uphill work. Too bad she never made it up the hill. Was Hickox writing about interviewing or writing an interview?

I believe everything Ike Turner said about Tina. I also believe in pink elephants. Ha.

Andy S. Chadbourne
Springvale, ME

I loved Timothy White's interview with Sting, but please tell me, what is sensimilla?

Cheryl Embrey
Rahway, NJ

Ed. Note: About \$150 an ounce.



Marcus Neapel

Your letters column amazed me. It is astounding how many publishing experts there are.

Henry Rollins has nothing but spare time on his hands, which explains how he has managed to record six albums with Black Flag, tour nearly 300 days a year, branch into spoken-word performance, videotape his "readings" (sorry, Henry, I don't know what else to call them) for *The Cutting Edge*, and write, publish, and distribute three books. Some people get all the breaks.

Rebecca Gavin
No address

Egbert & Cisco really missed the mark on Bryan Adams (July). Any 2-year-old could have written a more intelligent review. Those two must be pompous asses. Since when does the condition of an artist's skin have anything to do with his credibility? If they had paid more attention to Adams' music instead of worrying about his complexion, how he's dressed, or if the girl is going to take off all her clothes, they might have caught the essence of the man and his music.

Cheryl Arango
Glendora, NJ

As an up-and-coming do-it-yourselfer, I have found Geza X's articles very pertinent. From someone with a name like Geza X (was he excavated from the famous burial grounds, or did he read too much *Flaubert in Egypt*) you'd expect a sense of humor and a slightly offbeat point of view, but he also presented a very instructive and

well-mapped-out guide to the "mysteries of a voodoo ceremony"—mastering tapes and dealing with finances, something most artists can never learn enough about.

J.J. von Schlegel
New York, NY

SPIN is better than sex. It is more economical, more consistent, and often more frequent. Sign me up!

Kevin Cranin
Carbondale, IL

Hey, where did you dig up the meatball who wrote the Bob Geldof story (September)? Like, the title of the fourth Boomtown Rats album is *Mondo Bongo*, not "Mondo Bondo"—and while it has a track or two of danceable music, it is hardly a "dance record."

Furthermore, this wasn't the "last Americans heard from these Irishmen" prior to "Do They Know It's Christmas?" A fifth album, *V Deep*, was churned out in 1982. It's a good record. It was sold in American record stores just like the previous four.

Maybe the reason so few Americans have been turned on to this outstanding band has something to do with the ignorance of the American music press.

One of the '19 Boomtown Rats fans,'
Tim Davenport
Corvallis, OR

I recently wrote to SPIN, confessing my passion for Australian/New Zealand music and film. I even brought up one of my best-kept secrets, down under's musical wonders, *Midnight Oil*.

Understandably, I was beside myself to open to a *Midnight Oil* spread in your August issue. Not only is Bill Wolfe a talented, creative, and inspired writer, he is amazingly well informed and genuinely hip to the Aussie music scene.

Please continue to feature Oz/NZ bands in your publication. There are many surprising voices down under crying to be heard.

Shannon Dunn
Kansas City, MO

When I saw the Brian Eno article in the September issue, I could hardly wait to read it. I must say I rather enjoyed the interview, and the black and white photos by Anton Corbijn are suitable for framing. However, your closing question to Eno was completely out of the context and idiotic.

If your magazine ever interviews Prince, are you going to ask him if he has heard the new Eno album? Make sense, SPIN!

Martin Hanson
Jennings, LA

Dear Bob:

I get very little satisfaction from insulting a human replica like yourself—a counterfeit man, whom by all accounts is referred to as the person who brings chaos to order. Your chronic running of the mouth and soggy, half-baked Freudian analogies and hairbrained platitudes reaffirm my belief that you are the only person in life not running in any lane. You are a species apart—a veritable subterranean creature of extremely little account. The fact that anyone notices you at all is a deepening mystery.

The Smithsonian Institute called me the other day and asked me if you could be classified in any sense—plant, mineral, or animal. I responded that you were all three plus the additional categories of hypochondriacal bed wetter, quick shooter, street hood, part-time home and professional transvestite, two-handed wanker, molecular drudge, expanding mental black hole, and initiator of world revolution. However, to your credit, I did not tell them you were stupid. Oh no! Stupidity is a measurable thing. In your case, you fall below any measurable norm of mental quantification. A dead rabbit has more cranial activity.

We all know you are a criminally wimpy, borderline psychotic fag foot worshipper and that you wear fuzzy pink slippers to bed—quite normal in my range of thinking, but your father is singularly distressed that he raised a vegetable in women's clothing. My despondency about the matter is nil—I could care a bloody farthing. Your mother denies your existence.

You are swamp gas come to life, an undirected electrical discharge. You are human jelly, unevenly smearing the toast of humanity. We continue to endure—question is, how long? By the way, are you still having little accidents in your pants? Tough luck, old champ.

Bruce Eldridge
New York, NY



"I could go for something Gordon's"

The possibilities are endless



This One



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Working on Sweet Dreams

FLASH

Steve Van Zandt and Sun City; Jessica Lange as Patsy Cline; girl groups and smokin' in the boys' room; Yngwie Malmsteen; Jesse Rae off-kilter; the Beatle time forgot; Ike and Tina together—almost; Sleeper; the Washington Squares.

Monday, 5:30 AM: "Get up, yuh big galoots!" With the brain-rending whang of a spoon on a greasy old skillet, our cook Side Meal launched us one day last fall from a soft twilight of dreams into the harsh light of dawn. "Didja idjits fergit this is the day you make yer big movie?" wheezed the venerable geezer.

Sure enough, this was it, our movie debut. Some weeks earlier, Greg Perry, musical director of *Sweet Dreams*, the movie about country singer Patsy Cline's life, had selected us to play the Grand Ole Opry backup singers the night Patsy Cline made her first appearance there in the late '50s. Some days before, we'd met session singer Gary Pigg, assigned to us as our fourth member since we, Rounder recording artists Riders in the Sky, are a trio and needed another member for filming purposes to approximate the look of the Jordanaires. Forty-eight hours earlier we had gone through a three-hour wardrobe fitting, after which it was decided that our own

stage suits, which were designed in the fancy Gene, Roy, and Tex style of the '50s, were just the thing.

7 AM: The real fun began when we pulled our ponies up to Ryman Auditorium, home to the Opry for 30 years before the show was moved to a fancy new auditorium at Opryland. The Ryman is a venerable dowager, regal but tattered. The stage area was much smaller than we'd remembered, but walking across the hardwood boards evoked a thousand echoes of Opry's heyday.

9 AM: We finally ran through the first of what would be hundreds of nearly identical takes recreating the moment when Patsy Cline made her Opry debut singing "I Fall to Pieces." The day consisted of rehearsals, shot blocking, takes, retakes, and long waiting periods while the camera was repositioned. Since the story develops during the two minutes she is singing, many other scenes must be shot as well for the necessary intercutting. We went through

the same song, the same motions, the same scene time after time, take after take.

The next two days brought more of the same, till finally we saddled up and rode for the airport, heading for a string of concerts out West; but we still retain a mental album of snapshotlike recollections:

We remember our director, Karel Reisz, a gentle, distinguished Czechoslovakian fellow of middle years who previously directed such films as *Morgan, Who'll Stop the Rain*, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Unassuming and charming, he emanated manners and taste. Ever the gentleman, we recall him standing patiently at the foot of the stage attempting in his crisp British accent to get yet another introduction out of daydreaming Opry stalwart Stonewall Jackson: "Steawn-wohl! Steawn-wohl! Could we please try another time . . . Ah, Steawn-wohl . . . Robby, ah, would you be so kind as to get Steawn-wohl's attention for me?"

We remember standing on

Edited by Scott Cohen and Glenn O'Brien

the Opry stage behind Jessica Lange, who was just as beautiful as we'd expected, though a little bonier. Our memory might be clouded, however, by our recollection of Patsy Cline, who was a sturdy build. Still, with her wig and 1960-style dress she evoked the proper image. Although not extroverted, Lange was gracious and friendly, and received Rider Woody's gift of a set of our albums with genuine pleasure.

We remember Ed Harris, though all we saw of him was a blurred figure rushing from the balcony to the backstage area at the conclusion of the song in his role of Charlie Dick, Patsy's husband. Given the number of takes it took for everyone to be satisfied, we wondered if he prepared for the role by running wind sprints.

We remember Patsy Cline. How could we not feel her presence in those hallowed Ryman Auditorium walls—and the presence of Hank and Lefty and Ernest and Tex and all the other greats who trod that worn stage? We felt she was somehow there, the sassy girl from Virginia who took the floundering country-music world by storm in the late '50s and was among the first to cross over into pop with her deep, flowing voice and poignant, halting delivery of such songs as "Walking After Midnight," "Faded Home," "She's Got You," "Sweet Dreams," and the song we sang at least a hundred times over those three days of shooting. Cline's still-rising career was abruptly curtailed when she was 31 by the 1963 plane crash that killed her and two other Opry stars. We kind of hoped that wherever she was, she was enjoying what we were doing half as much as we did.

—Ranger Doug and Too Slim

Yakety Yak

We play rock 'n' roll because we're too lazy to work and too nervous to steal.

—Dan Stuart,
Green on Red

It's amazing how many people I see in London who look like me. Even girls!

—Grace Jones

COOL AID

As the rock benefit bandwagon rolls on, blazing a trail of goodwill and celebrity tax write-offs, one project is distinguishing itself by its aggressive political stance. Steve Van Zandt's antiapartheid record "Sun City" is due out on Manhattan Records in late October. Coproduced with Arthur Baker, it features performances by Bruce Springsteen, Bono of U2, Sly and Robbie, Bonnie Raitt, Pat Benatar, Peter Wolf, Jimmy Cliff, Peter Garrett of Midnight Oil, David Ruffin, Eddie Kendricks, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Miles Davis, Gil Scott-Heron, Bobby Womack, Ruben Blades, Clarence Clemons, Kashif, Lou Reed, Joey Ramone, Duke Bootee, Ray Bareto, Big Youth, George Clinton, Darlene Love, Mike Munroe, Stevie Bator, Nona Hendryx, Melle Mel, Run-D.M.C., Kurtis Blow and Afrika Bambaataa.

Sun City is an entertainment complex in Bophuthatswana, which South African officials have designated as a homeland for blacks. Van Zandt: "Sun City symbolizes that relocation policy. The government applies pressure for the homelands to become independent countries, the idea being that when all the blacks are

technically out of the country then South Africa can go to

majority rule. Every time somebody plays Sun City they justify the relocation policy."

The idea originated last October when Van Zandt took a month-long trip to South Africa to write songs for his next album.

Van Zandt: "I met with everybody I could: AZAPU (Azanian Peoples Organization), the UDF. I went to Zimbabwe for the African National Congress, Bishop Tutu's South African Council of Churches, sports people, teachers, legal people. The real hardliners didn't want me to be there. They've grown to hate the liberal white element's lip service more than the enemy they know. I said, 'I don't want to talk to the boycott organizations in New York. I want to see this story from the beginning.' Some people were distrustful of me, but by the end of a conversation, no matter how difficult the beginning, there was always much mutual respect."

Van Zandt returned to the States with the song, and soon after, he parted ways with EMI. The loss of a contract meant his album plans were stalled, but he now believes that "Sun City" could work as a collaborative benefit project. He began pitching a demo to

AT BANGS' HAIRDRESSERS — WESTCHESTER, N.Y.



Robert McGinnis

other labels, at that stage minus the other artists' contributions. "We got the same reaction from two or three different people: 'This guy's politics make us a little nervous.' One other company, which I won't name, said they didn't feel it was a big enough issue!"

Other musicians were initially more helpful than the record labels.

Van Zandt: "The first people we contacted who were very supportive were the New York rappers. From there I called Jackson Browne, who said yes immediately. He was a great help because he has a studio in his house." Browne functioned as the West Coast office, and they sent the tapes back and forth, catching people as they passed through town and adding

them to the mix.

Baker describes the sound as "more alternative, much more of a street record than 'We Are the World.' It's a dance record—rock 'n' roll over a hip hop beat."

Manhattan plans to release a 7-inch and 12-inch EP with four different versions.

Though Van Zandt has proposed that the Africa Fund handle disbursement of profits to antiapartheid groups, the main idea is to increase public awareness of the problem. "There's gotta be a place in rock 'n' roll for somebody talking about reality. I didn't expect this kind of passionate support for the thing. If this record's a success, maybe it'll be a little easier for people to talk about the issues."

—Sue Cummings

Girl Groups

Nobody knows where Johnny has gone, but Judy left at the same time. Why was he holding her hand, when he's supposed to be yours? What's a poor girl to do when life becomes a Lesley Gore song? Join an all-girl rock band. But which one? The Screamin' Sirens or the Shangri-Las? The Go-Gos or the Ronettes?

The Ronettes were fast. And cool. Talked fast. Drove fast cars. The Go-Gos go lite. They radiate a healthy glow no one east of Dayton trusts. If Donna Reed had nieces, they could have been the Go-Gos. In fact, if the Go-Gos had happened 20 years ago, they'd have been singing "Pineapple Princess" right up there next to Annette.

If the Screamin' Sirens threw a bridal shower for one of their friends, they'd give her Frederick's of Hollywood lingerie and sexual Tupperware. They love raunchy cowboys, and if *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues* ever makes it to the screen, the Screamin' Sirens definitely

oughta do the soundtrack. They give good barbecue.

The Shangri-Las used a can of Adorn each. The Go-Gos go for regular pedicures, and the Ronettes use Magic Markers when they run out of eyeliner. The Shangri-Las are in a time warp and tease their hair into bouffant heaven. But hair spray is coming back. It just goes to show you that everything that rises must converge, even hairdos.

The Ronettes kicked ass in pinball and avoided "the natural look." The Go-Gos



Michael Ochs Archives

never had roots showing and never looked like they'd stayed out all night, even if they had. The Go-Gos giggled in the movies, the Ronettes fooled around, and the Screamin' Sirens picked a fight with the ticket taker and never made it inside the theater, but conned somebody into buyin' them a bottle and got drunk in a pool hall down the block.

The Screamin' Sirens wear sombreros and use lots of Dep. They like crinolines and cowboy boots and fishnets and don't take no shit from nobody, thank you very much. The Go-Gos are rock 'n' roll Yuppies. They go to male strip joints and giggle while the Screamin' Sirens are busy grabbing crotches. The Ronettes go home with the strippers.

The Go-Gos were the girls in high school who didn't wanna hang around with you, and the Ronettes were the girls with bad reputations your mother warned you against. The Ronettes smoked in the girl's room, and the Shangri-Las stuffed their bras with Hostess Cupcakes.

The Ronettes and the Shangri-Las and the Screamin' Sirens could walk in spike heels without looking stupid, but the Screamin' Sirens don't bother, 'cuz they have Tony Lamas and Lucchese. The Ronettes and the Shangri-Las' boyfriends had names like Joey and Tony and Jimmy. The Go-Gos' boyfriends were most likely named Justin or Craig, and the Sirens went out with guys like "Downtown Louie" or "Manny the Mouth."

The Dixie Cups were heading to "The Chapel of Love" while the Velveteen searched for a "Needle in a Haystack." The Shangri-Las did it, but not on the first date and only if they were *really* in love. The Ronettes didn't wait for the first date. They got treated badly by guys who never learned about "The Best Part of Breakin' Up." The Go-Gos' lips are sealed, and the Shangri-Las ended up "Walkin' in the Sand."

If the Ronettes were on prime time, they would have been on *Bewitched* or *My Little Margie*. The Screamin' Sirens are avant-garde *Petticoat Junction* and the Shangri-Las could have hung out with *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

And when the Beav grew up, he could have married Go-Go Belinda Carlisle.

—Sukey Pett

Men's rooms—area code 212

When you enter the men's room at the COPACABANA (755-6010), mirrors bend. Then the world looks at you. It's easier to lay a sleeping bag on the living room floor of the White House than to get inside the men's room at 21 CLUB (582-7200). As the Earth turns, the sinks, hot air blower, toilet paper dispensers, and toilet seats in REGINE'S (826-0990) turn with it.

Clouds from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries roll by the men's room of the PEPPERMINT LOUNGE (989-7457). The men's room at the RITZ (254-2800) is large enough to throw a small dinner party in. The LATIN QUARTER (586-3904) men's room is overpriced. A Heimlich Maneuver poster hangs in the men's room of 2001 ODYSSEY (718-745-8970).

The men's room at HEARTBREAK (691-2388) will be closed through October 24.

Photos on display in the men's room at AREA (226-8423) were taken by a bear in Yosemite Park. The color scheme of the CAT CLUB (505-0090) john smacks of Jackson Pollack. The black and white tiles on the floor of the ANVIL (924-8528) men's room are arranged in the exact pattern as the tiled floor of the ancient Mayan Temple of Tepeu. The men's room in the PYRAMID (874-3701) was ordered from a Sears catalog.

The john in DANCETERIA (620-0515) used to be in the MUDD CLUB (phone disconnected). Employees are advised to wear waders in the men's room at the MINESHAFT (243-7088). Photos from spaceshuttle XII show a leaky valve in LIMBO LOUNGE (475-5621). The men's room at UNDERGROUND (254-4005) is 91 feet below sea level. At night, the glow from the METROPOLE (382-0088) men's room can be seen in Dayton.

The three most sought-after keys in America are to the presidential men's room in the White House (202-456-1414), the executive men's room at IBM (914-765-1900), and Steve Rubell's bathroom at PALLADIUM (473-7171).

Midnight, August 7. There are 19 women in the PALLADIUM men's room, 14 in AREA's (right), 11 in the PEP's, and 1 in CINEMA IV's (548-5084).

At THE SAINT (674-8369), it's hard to tell which is the men's room. Once, only clergy could use the men's room at LIMELIGHT



Paul Collier

(807-7850). A toilet flushes in BEULAH LAND (473-9310). CLUB A (308-2333) has pay toilets. At RED PARROT (247-1530), there are after-dinner mints in the bottom of the urinals.

Old farts hang around the men's room at ROSELAND (247-0200). If you meet a young woman, take her to the men's room at STUDIO 54 (489-7667). When you walk around the men's room in HELLFIRE (no phone), the world looks up to you. When you walk into the men's room at CBGB (top) (982-4052), you know you've arrived.

—Scott Cohen



Paul Collier

World Beat

"A who win the Grammy?" sang Michael Rose, crouched against the muddy back wall behind the stage at Sunsplash. His taunting smile indicated that he was the one responsible for reggae's first such award, so much so that his new solo label in Jamaica is called Grammy Rose. The former lead singer of Black Uhuru debuted his new group, the Government, featuring Tyrone Downie and Junior Marvin of the Wailers, at the Splash. The rumor mill claims that Rose has never received the actual award, which the group's founder, Duckie Simpson, picked up for him in Hollywood . . . "Reggae Beat East" DJ Steve Radzi of WNDA in Miami is just back from Poland, where, he reports, there is a tremendous interest in reggae. "The top groups," he observes, "are Israel, Kultura (Culture), and Daab, which is pronounced 'dub.' " The Soviet Union is also experiencing a widespread, although illegal, growth in underground reggae recordings, sung in Russian about subjects like *sinsemilla* and human rights . . . Peter Tosh (right) at press time

is pissed at his record company and refuses to deliver the final album he owes them under his present contract. Main bones of contention are that the videocassette of his Greek Theatre concert was never issued in the States and that an album of his greatest hits was released without his permission—in Zimbabwe. We hope his liar will talk to their liar and straighten things out soon, because the next LP promises to be his strongest in years, with such tracks as the "No Nuclear War" and "Naw Go to Jail for Ganja No More," "I'm Gonna Testify," "Apartheid Reincarnated," and remakes of "Vampire" and "Babylon Queendom" . . . Coxone's Brooklyn studios are moving into gear, with his first U.S. productions, featuring Clifford Jordan and Roland Alphonso, now in release . . . Brigadier Jerry will have his very first LP shortly on the upsurging U.S. RAS label . . . Steel Pulse's *Babylon the Bandit* is being held up by Elektra, where the group is over budget and underappreciated . . . The Ras Brass, led by Dean Fraser, has officially split from Lloyd Parks' *We the People Band*, which has reformed as well

... "Next year," assured Bunny Wailer, sporting a too-optimistic "World Tour 85" T-shirt backstage at Sunsplash. He's reportedly had a vision from Jah telling him to fly, so he's getting ready for what could be one of the all-time great tours, soon come . . . Hard to believe that the current prime minister to Jamaica, who has done absolutely nothing to help the music in five years in office, was the founder of the island's first record company, WIRL. Not only that, Edward Seaga was Joe Higgs's first manager. He has failed to establish a long-needed copyright law to protect Jamaican composers . . . The leader of the recent coup in Nigeria just happens to be an old and close personal friend of Afro-reggae star Sunny Okosun. During a recent gig in New York's S.O.B.'s club shortly after the coup, Okosun promised to bring pressure to bear on the new regime for the release of Fela, who has been imprisoned for more than a year now. Let's hope he is finally freed by the time this sees print . . . Till such time, Jah Love, Everyone!

—Roger Steffens



Andy White: Footnote to History

The rumor that's been raging for more than 20 years, that a session man and not Ringo Starr played drums on "Please Please Me"/"Love Me Do," the Beatles' first No. 1 hit single, is, according to session man Andy White, true.

After 23 years, White, now in his late 50s, tears away the veil of silence surrounding that famed recording session and reveals what happened in E.M.I. Studio Number One on that cold September day in 1962, when for one bright moment he became a member of the greatest pop group in the world and forever a footnote in rock 'n' roll history.

Could you set the scene for us—what was the general atmosphere in the studio that afternoon? After all, a session man was being brought in to replace the regular drummer. It was okay . . . I mean, there didn't seem to be any animosity, if that's what you mean. He [Ringo] may have felt some, but I suppose you couldn't blame him. He should worry now.

Were you allowed to improvise? Or did George Martin say, "Andy, this is what you're going to do . . ."? No, actually, what they—what the guys did, John and Paul—they had the routines down. They had obviously been doing this stuff for some time in clubs and the like. So they had an idea of what they wanted. And actually, if you listen to "Please Please Me" and "Love Me Do," the drum sound is different from any of the other things we may have done. On "Please Please Me" the distinctive sound

comes from the bass and the snare drum. I didn't use a high hat on that one.

Did you also play on "PS. I Love You"? Was Ringo relegated to the side once more?

Now, uh, I'm not sure, and I'll tell you why. On the session I played, in the same day we did five titles.

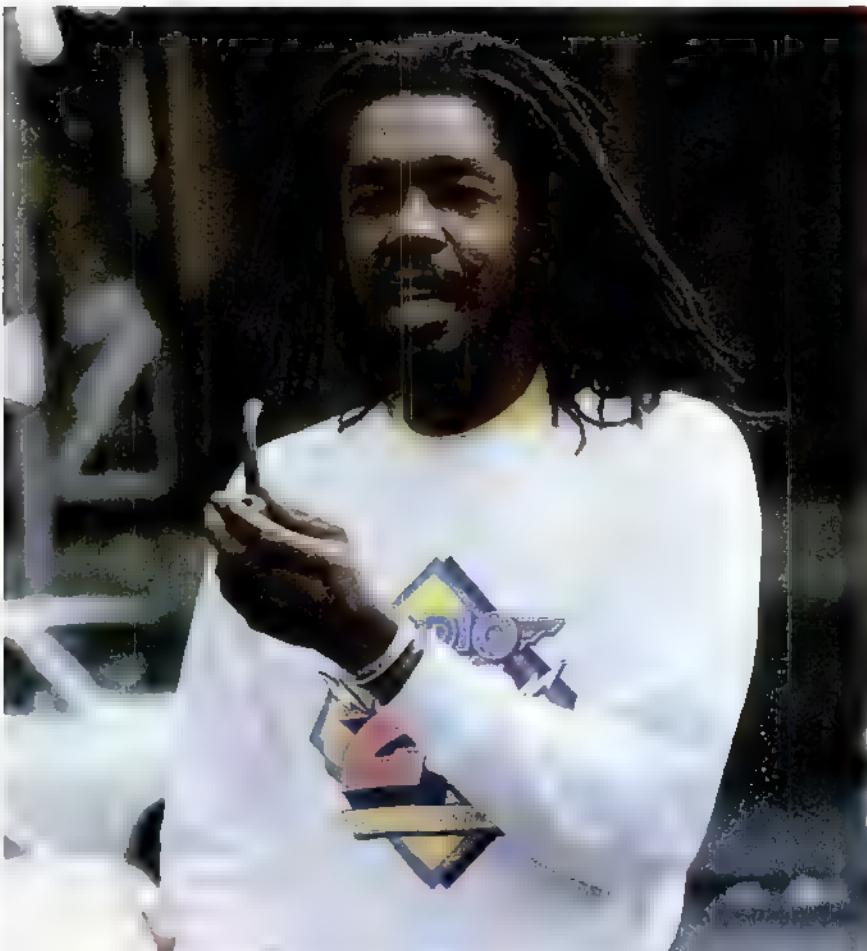
How would you rate Ringo as a drummer? George Martin said that at this point "He couldn't do a drum roll to save his life."

He didn't have to [laughter]. But, he was okay for what they required. Because technically, their stuff is very simple. Ringo suited what they wanted. He didn't have to be any [better], so, I mean, why bother? Playing, you know, in the profession—then that's different, you have to work. You do a lot of practicing.

Were you aware of the Beatles' music prior to the recording session?

Only inasmuch as they were known in Liverpool. They had fans back there. But there were none at the studio that day. You see, as far as the world was concerned, they were unknown. In those days we [session players] did a lot of work with groups like that. In fact, some groups didn't even do the records at all. It was done by session musicians.

Among the groups? Herman's Hermits. We had a set rhythm section that was session musicians. And then you'd put the voices in. Yeah,





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so they'd decide that they were going to do another couple of cuts for the Hermits and then get the rhythm section together in the room, and that's the last you saw of them, because then they brought Herman in and he'd do the vocal track.

Does it bother you that Ringo is probably given credit for some of the work you did? No, it doesn't bother me.

And when "Please Please Me" went to No. 1? No, it didn't bother me then, either. Because, as I said, we were doing things like this anyway, and a lot of the stuff we did never became popular. So maybe when one became popular, you thought,

"Oh, well . . ."

Didn't you feel like telling everyone, "Hey, This is not Ringo! It's Andy White!" Well, they'd have probably denied it. Which they did. They didn't actually deny it point-blank, but, uh, it was kind of covered up.

Now, 23 years later, are you happy with the way . . . I could've done with more money [laughter]!

How much money did you receive for your work that day? It was £7 British sterling [\$10], but for a three-hour recording session, that £7 was a lot of money then.

—Bill Farlie

"This is not a gimmick," insists videomaker Jesse Rae, who wears full Scottish battle dress every day.

"Hey, if I was a girl I'd never scream at someone dressed like me," says videomaker Jesse Rae. He is wearing, as usual, full Scottish battle dress—kilt, sword, and a heavy steel helmet that covers half his face. "I am trying to bring credibility to the kilt in 1985. There are so many Scots in North America, and they should be proud of their heritage," he continues on this hot summer's day. "Besides, the kilt is dead healthy. I haven't worn tight trousers since I was a wee lad, and I never intend to again."

But the man should not be judged by his skirt alone. His first video, for his single "D.E.S.I.R.E.," won a prize at the 1982 UCLA film festival. One of the judges, Francis Ford Coppola, called it a true marriage between rock and video. Rae's latest single, "Over the Sea," a sort of Scots-ballad-meets-American-funk, was co-written with Bernie Worrell of P-Funk/Talking Heads fame. The video, which shows a warrior clambering up the Brooklyn Bridge in a kilt, is also receiving acclaim.

His helmet (made to measure by a Scottish auto worker) makes it difficult to guess his age, but he has been on the music scene for some time. He flew from Scotland to Cleveland, Ohio, eight years ago after seeing a music paper advertisement for a lead

singer. "The band broke up as soon as I arrived," he laughs. "I didn't like Cleveland much. They're too fond of English bands." Rae's dislike of England is well known. "English people think I'm just a gimmick," he grumbles. He refuses to play London, and all his records sold there are on an import label. He feels he has more in common with the United States, especially musically. "Scots military drumming shares many of the same rhythms as American R&B."

After Cleveland he moved to the West Coast, where, calling himself Charlie Peep and the Shepherds, he auditioned for the Gong Show wearing shorts and rubber boots, singing "Do the Sheep." He failed. But he did manage to sing backup vocals for Daryl Hall and George Clinton, and do the handclaps for a Stevie Wonder demo tape. He claims to have the longest and loudest handclap in the business, and for a while it became his job in a New Jersey club.

Nowadays he divides his time between his New York-based company, Scotland Video, and Edinburgh, where he lives in a schoolhouse furnished with desks. He's working on a new song and video entitled "Chainsaw." "It was inspired by Amy Carter," he explains, "who at 12 years old asked for a chainsaw for Christmas."

—Hugh St. Clair

Would you buy a chain saw from this man? A lot of people let Jesse Rae have his way.

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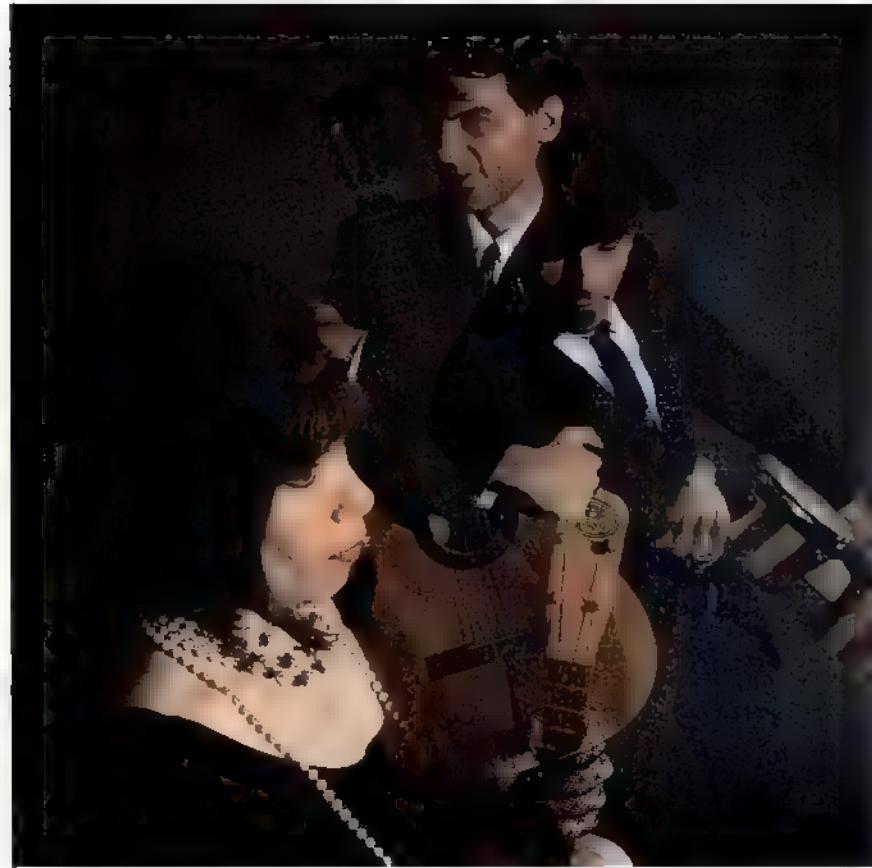
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The hippest Squares around

Tom Goodkind and Bruce Paskow, two veteran practitioners of new wave, were in a studio cutting a demo in 1983 when suddenly out of the recesses of their subconscious oozed a strange hatred of new wave. They began to play "If I Had a Hammer." They enjoyed it so much, they played it again. Something clicked. "We realized, 'Hey, this is what we really want to play!'" says Goodkind.

Goodkind and Paskow decided a good folk act needed a female voice, and they recruited Lauren Agnelli, a soprano who had once sung with a group called Nervous Rex and wrote rock criticism under the byline Trixie A. Balm. She too had grown disenchanted with new wave. "I'd see all these people who were disheartened and blue," she says. "I just wanted to make music that would make them feel better." And the Washington Squares were born.

Preparing their act, they not only perfected Folk Music's Greatest Hits ("If I Had a Hammer," "There's a Meetin' Here Tonight," "Goodnight Irene"), but they also adopted

the mannerisms, styles, and habits of the folk acts of the '50s and early '60s: berets, Ray Ban sunglasses, basic black vestments, goatees if you got 'em.

The costumes gave the band a visual identity and hipped the audience to the fun that was to follow. A typical Squares set consisted of faithfully rendered folk anthems and stylistically compatible new material, combined with slap-shot wit and satire. Goodkind and Paskow would drop lines about Ronnie R. or Jesse J. or Rimbaud or Sting. ("This song is about the Civil War. Actually, it's about the Civil War chess set.") While tuning a guitar: "This is a John Cage song. The next song won't be a John Cage song, but it's what John Cage sings in the shower.") Soon jokes would be bouncing around the room like so many Wham-O Super Balls. Then Agnelli would quiet the audience by starting something that sounded like a saccharin, concerned New Christy Minstrels number that would turn out to be "Girls Just Want to Have Fun."

The act was a hit. Within a year, the Washington Squares

were being labeled "the hippest thing shaking in New York," and they began touring the country.

Tom: Over the summer, we went to Philadelphia for the Philadelphia Folk Festival. We did a TV show, *AM Philadelphia*.

Lauren: Yeah, Tommy Whatsisname was on with us.

Bruce: Lasorda.

SPIN: The L.A. Dodgers manager? Did he say anything to you?

Lauren: He said "Hey, paisan!" And he told us to eat at his brother's restaurant.

Tom: L.A. was very uncool.

Nobody liked us. We got a bad review. But everywhere else was cool. In San

Francisco, 500 people came—gays, beats, North Beach types, hipsters.

Bruce: We had this weird synchronistic experience. We were leaving the City Lights bookstore, and we saw this guy, and we found out that he's the one who originally sold beatnik kits back in 1958. And now we're selling them: beret, shades, map of the Village, pearls for girls, paste-on goatee for guys.

Lauren: In Washington we

played before an all-lesbian crowd. They kept asking for lesbian songs.

SPIN: Did you do some?

Lauren: Sure.

SPIN: What are lesbian songs?

Lauren: You know. "People think that we're just friends/ But we're really les-bi-ans." I kept saying, "Here's one that Tom's wife taught me."

Tom: Yeah, that was great. I really appreciated that.

Lauren: We met Richie Havens in New Jersey. He asked me if I was an Aquarius.

Bruce: He had a great line. Somebody said, "I love your beer commercial," and he said, "We must all do whatever we can to change the world."

To avoid becoming just a nostalgia act, the group has replaced many of its folk-hit covers with updated folk songs that Agnelli rescued from the Library of Congress, including a bluesy "When I Was a Young Girl" that works well. The group has also written some new folk songs that deal with current problems—like "D Train," a song about riding a crowded subway to a crummy job.

The Squares always played their songs with more energy and drive than did their Sputnik-era predecessors,

whose vocal style hadn't been informed by 30 years of rock 'n' roll. That tendency has been advanced to the point that the group that once spurned new wave now calls itself a new wave folk act. ("We're a meld," says Paskow. "A meld?" query his partners. "Yeah, meld. Like a Vulcan mind meld. Or a cheese meld.")

"It's true," says Goodkind. "We took a lot of energy from new music and brought it to folk, and now we're ready to return this music, which is more heartfelt."

They can start with music of heartfelt gratitude, since they were just signed to a five-album deal by A&M Records.

Whether what they're playing is new wave or old wave, the Washington Squares are keeping the folk faith.

Tom: We gave Pete Seeger a hammer last week. We said, "After all these years of singing 'If I Had a Hammer,' we thought you should have one." He was very grateful.

SPIN: Was that the first time somebody gave him one?

Bruce: No, I have the feeling it happens every week.

Lauren: His wife says he uses them on his boat.

—Jamie Malanowski



Ike and Tina on collision course

For the first time in many years, Ike Turner will be touring clubs throughout the East as he makes his way back to his hometown, St. Louis, for a Halloween "Coming Home" party. At that point Ike and Tina, who's on the western leg of her tour, will be only approximately 351 miles apart!

—Scott Cohen and Karen Dolan

Above: Ike (solid line) and Tina (broken line) cross rivers deep and mountains high to wind up only 351 miles apart—in St. Louis and Tulsa—on October 31. The tremors will probably be felt as far away as the East Coast.

Above left: Meet the espresso bongo underground. The Washington Squares are (R-L) Bruce Paskow, Tom Goodkind, Lauren Agnelli.

The Bach of rock

*Yngwie Malmsteen's music, probably the heaviest of heavy metal, defies gravity; it goes straight to heaven. His music is based not on the usual 12-bar blues progression of rock, but on the classical scales of Bach, Paganini, et al. Combining acoustic and Strat guitars on the same record (*Rising Force*), Yngwie melds the two instruments into a blaze of 128th notes, and the result is awesome.*

Yngwie says he doesn't come from a musical family, but his parents spoiled him with instruments of every description and his sister plays in a symphony. In the beginning Yngwie dallied with the trumpet—probably just to be obnoxious—but after seeing a special on Swedish TV the day Jimi Hendrix died, he removed the untouched acoustic guitar from his bedroom wall. He hasn't put it down since.

I started playing in bands when I was 10, usually with people who were a lot older than me—I was quite ahead. There was just no one my age playing, so I had no choice. I had some classical lessons, but they have nothing to do with what I'm doing today. I just have a very inquisitive mind. I have perfect pitch.

I started listening to Hendrix and Deep Purple, then I got more and more inclined to classical music, because I thought it was much more rewarding.

Rock 'n' roll became too limiting, and I started listening to the more progressive bands, such as Genesis and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer. They incorporated a lot of classical, but I thought they lacked the heaviness. I wanted to have it fucking heavy and classical. I wanted it to be like fucking rocking hell—and soul, dynamic.

I don't think anyone ever went farther than Johann Sebastian Bach. That's why I go to the root, I go to the source of actual music today. I don't fucking listen to some idiot playing classical music in some rock 'n' roll band and get inspired from that. I go to the guy himself. In my personal opinion, I think he is God. Johann Sebastian Bach.

One of the reasons I don't play like everybody else is because I don't listen to other guitar players. Nobody

explores the instrument any more. I've been incorporating a lot of things that nobody's done on the guitar before. Paganini did it on the violin, and everybody thought he was the devil because he was so wild.

You see, Bach had different periods. He went through writing things that could be very simplistic and things that were totally off the wall. For instance, the king calls him up—they didn't have phones, but let's say the king calls him up and says, "Hey! I'm having a party Saturday night, can you write me something?" Johann would say, "All right, I'll bring down the boys and we'll do it." That's how he wrote the simpler things, the dance numbers.

Now, he did write stuff for himself. Very recently they found some things he wrote that weren't known before. What they were called I don't know, but it is incredible stuff. Bach was very influenced by Vivaldi. When he was little he used to walk great distances to see Vivaldi. Buxtehude was another of his influences when he was young. Then Bach married his cousin, was kicked out of his family, had 25 kids, and went blind. He was really cool, I really liked him. These guys were really heavy. They were much more rock 'n' roll than anybody today.

Enough about the classics. When did you become a pro? I was going to be an artist right from the beginning, 'cause I was extremely talented at that. My teachers would give me tests, and rather than filling them out I would be drawing on the back, and that would just fucking freak them out. Not like any drawing—I was technically perfect. My father and mother were both artists, so that was something I inherited. That's what I was doing during high school; then music kind of took over more and more and more, and I became a very antisocial person.

Except to your band. No, to everybody!

Were you reclusive? I was about 14, and I didn't go to school, just told everybody to fuck off.

Did your parents kick you out?



No. My mother was very understanding, and thanks to her I am where I am today. She supported me during a long period of time when I couldn't afford to do anything.

Do you think your band sees you as being difficult to work with?

I don't care what they see me like, because if they don't do what I tell them, they can fuck off. Period.

There's a stereotype that people who play heavy metal are really stupid. What do you think of that?

I don't think. I couldn't care less. I transcend stuff like that. I never became a musician to be a star or to do interviews or to explain anything to anybody. I became a musician because I'm an artist who happens to be a guitar player, and I devote everything to it. I am a composer. I don't compare myself to anyone. It's not a sport, it's music—we're musicians, we're not playing baseball games. Total devotion to what you're doing, instead of being a poseur, a trend trying to be happening for a year and then you're out.

Do you see yourself playing

this style for the rest of your life? Is there any reason for change?

I don't look any farther than one day ahead. Maybe I'll be a race-car driver.

Do you ever work on a guitar yourself?

I do everything to it. I scallop the wood between the frets so it's concave. I have about 60 Stratocasters—my house looks like a guitar shop. I have other guitars, but I love my Strats. Fender gives them to me for free. They want me to have everything.

Do you have any favorites?

There's one of them that's all beat to shit—that's the one I'm using most of the time. I've broken it many times. I smack my guitars on the stage all the time.

Did you get that from Hendrix? Maybe. I do things different than him.

Why do you like Stratocasters so much?

Because to me, they're the perfect woman. If you find the perfect woman, then you are faithful all the time, aren't you? I have other guitars, but I never play them as the

main thing—I might fuck around with them. Let's put it this way: when you're 10 years old and you buy a guitar and you play that guitar 10 hours a day, as your body grows you're going to get so used to that guitar that it becomes impossible to play anything else.

What do you think of Prince? Everyone's been comparing him to Jimi Hendrix. You can't compare him to Hendrix.

He's using all Hendrix's imagery, like his guitar posturing and the way he dresses.

Rubbish! You can't compare a Volkswagen to a Rolls Royce. I don't give a shit about Prince's musicianship or what he looks like, he's just a poseur. If anyone compares him to Hendrix, it's just pathetic, and whoever makes that comparison is an airhead. What Hendrix did at the time he came along was really worth something. A lot of people look like him, but you can't compare him. He was the fucking Jesus of the electric guitar.

—George DuBois

It's heavy metal surf music. That's how lead singer Chris Berardo describes Sleeper. Chris is pure teen idol: he's fun to listen to; he's fun to watch. He's a talented lead singer who's incredibly good-looking. We like that. Every band should have one.

Sleeper plays loud. Sleeper plays well, which is not surprising in a band comprised of the best session players. Sleeper even has a bass guitarist who once wrote a book with Felix Pappalardi.

Sleeper does not have a record contract, which bothers them not at all. They've been together four months and are sure that as you're reading this, they will be a very hot item.

We like that in a band.

Did you start playing music to meet girls?
Of course. And whenever we go up to a pretty girl and she ignores us, we just assume it's because she's gay.

You must have had some great experiences picking up girls.
Sure have. The best time was in a bar with our friend Liam. He spent all night talking to this gorgeous girl. So we thought "terrific," because she was so beautiful. At one point—and this is after an hour—we leaned into the booth to listen, and heard Liam saying, "I just cannot believe that only a few years ago you could get a Big Mac, fries, and a Coke. All for under a dollar."

How do you cope with a hot, sexy rock image? Being a rock star is definitely great for your ego. One night we were in the Hard Rock Cafe and Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney walked in. These two girls rushed over to where we were standing, and do you know what they said to us? They yelled "Get the fuck out of our way!" I mean, they could have said that to anyone. The point is, they chose us. Well, anyway, you all look so cute. How did you put this band together? Did you hold auditions or go-sees? [Ed. note: Go-see—a model's "audition." Also known as a cattle call. See CATTLE.]

We held normal auditions. Finding the right lead guitarist was the hardest. We saw lots of people that were very good, but Len was the best. But we were trying to be cool, so we told him that he was very good and we'd let him know. Len said, "Thank you very much for auditioning me. It sure would be a pleasure to work with you. So call me and we'll have a few beers and talk. And if you don't call, well, fuck you all." We knew we had found our guitarist. *Playing great hard rock in New York is an enormous task these days, especially since everyone else is doing his ban and electronic music.*

Hip hop? Is that where a lot of guys roll around on their backs and ruin their records? Or is that called scratchin'?

QUESTION 1
Who was your greatest musical influence?

Woody AI

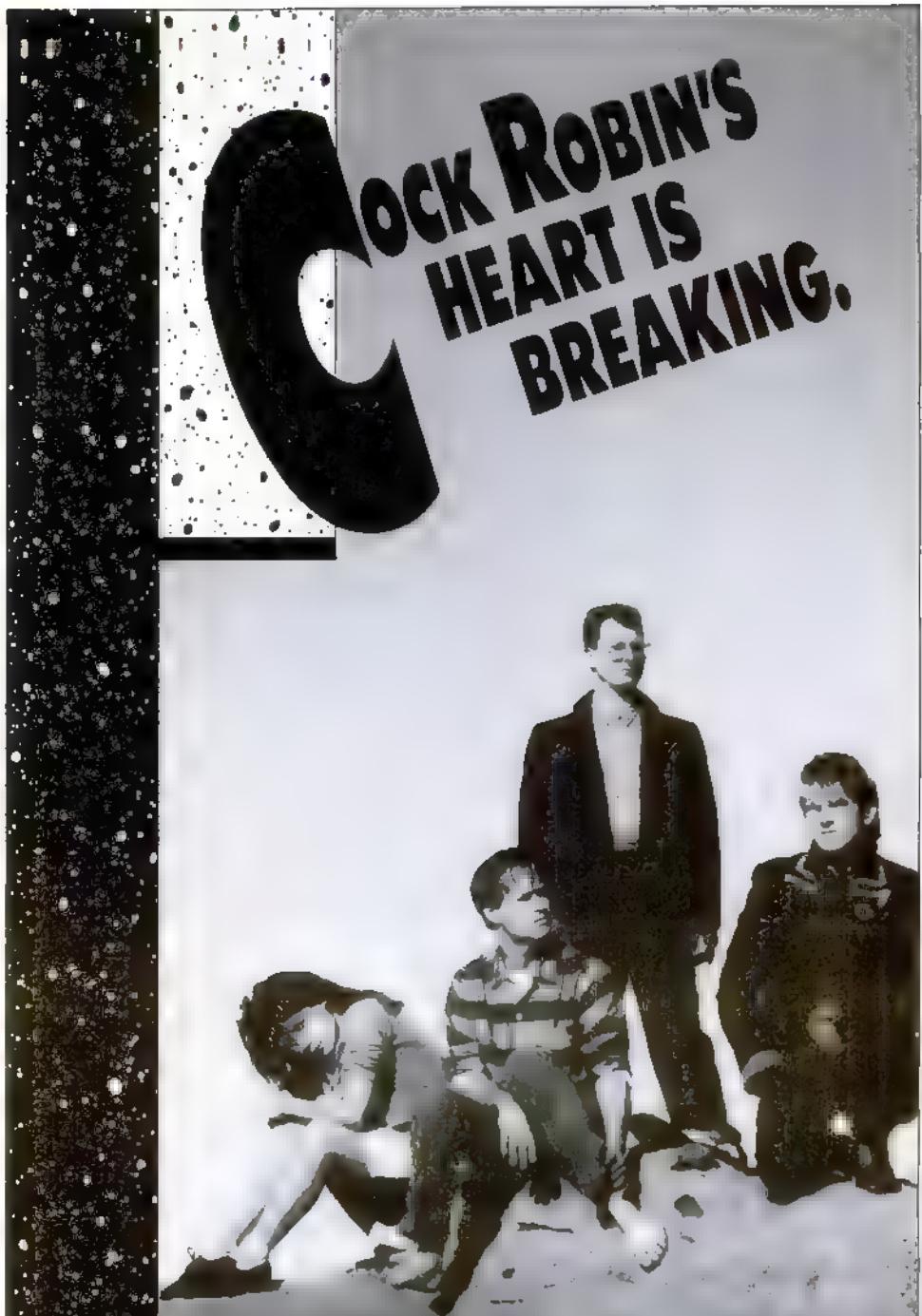
Seriously?
Seriously! The Monkees, and we're not kidding. Do you like this idea of a new Monkees album?

Do you like this video (pointing to TV)?
Oh, isn't this that group Flock of Men Without Hats?
Do you like Eric Clapton?

Do you like Springsteen?
Yeah, especially the song that goes "and I bought slacks."

STICKER:
No, the words are "but now I'm trapped."
Yeah, right, it's a song about going to Bloomingdale's.
How do you define cool?

Well, you know when you see an old man who wears a fishing hat? The kind with all the hooks and buttons? And his shorts are plaid and his shoes match his belt? Well, he epitomizes cool, because he doesn't even know that he's not. The coolest thing is to be so cool that you don't even know that you might not be.



America's newest hit band is exploding all over the country with their hit single, "When Your Heart Is Weak" "Cock Robin." On Columbia Records, Cassettes and Compact Discs.



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Northridge, CA

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University of Connecticut
Storrs, CT

WVTC
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WVCI
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KAR
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Boulder, CO

WVDR
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University of Miami
Coral Gables, FL

WUCF
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL

WUGG
University of Georgia
Athens, GA

WRAA
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA

KTUH
University of Hawaii
Honolulu, HI

KRUI
University of Iowa
Iowa City, IA

KESU
Idaho State University
Boise, ID

WNUW
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL

WYUA
Loyola University
Romeoville, IL

KUHK
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS

WTUL
Tulane University
New Orleans, LA

WKKL
Cape Cod Community College
West Barnstable, MA

WTKS
Brandeis University
Waltham, MA

WMPG
University of Maine
Orono, ME

WNEB
University of Maine
Orono, ME

WMUC
University of Maryland
College Park, MD

WCYT
Towson State University
Towson, MD

WCBN
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI

WIDI
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI

WJHM
University of Minnesota
Duluth, MN

KQAL
Winona State University
Winona, MN

KWUR
Washington University
St. Louis, MO

KCCU
University of Missouri-Columbia
Columbia, MO

KGLT
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT

WNYC
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC

WNAU
University of North Carolina-Greensboro
Greensboro, NC

KZUM
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE

WFRO
Dartmouth University
Hanover, NH

WJPR
Stetson State College
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WSCU
Salem Hall University
South Orange, NJ

KRMS
New Mexico State University
Los Cruces, NM

KUHV
University of Nevada
Las Vegas, NV

WCOR
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Albany, NY

WHRW
SUNY-Binghamton
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WHRU
Hofstra University
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WCIS
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Susquehanna University
Selinsgrove, PA

WPSU
Penn State University
University Park, PA

WBCB
Kings College
Wilkes-Barre, PA

WUSC
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC

WVNU
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, TN

WUTS
University of the South
Sewanee, TN

WUTK
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN

KXTT
Texas Tech
Lubbock, TX

WFUV
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT

KCMU
University of Washington
Seattle, WA

WUWC
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI

WMESE
Milwaukee School of Engineering
Milwaukee, WI

WSSU
University of Wisconsin-Superior
Superior, WI

WWVU
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV

KUWE
University of Wyoming
Laramie, WY

SPIN Radio Concerts are produced by Edward Rosen; recording engineer is Steve Barker of BB&T; and sound processing equipment is from Barcus-Berry Engineering, Huntington Beach, CA.

"You don't need to ground your turntable to play Jesus and Mary records, 'cause the hum will fit right in, and parents will scream to 'get that shit off the stereo—now!' Which is possibly the highest compliment one generation can pay to the music of the next." *

Article by Sue Cummings

Photography by Derek Ridgers

JESUS & MARY CHAIN



Every summer morning the jets dump several hundred Americans at Gatwick and Heathrow airports in London. Dollars in hand, they rush the change booths. If you wind up on a flight sitting next to an English person, start a chat about currency exchange rates. It might become a cultural exchange.

During the flight an overconfident industry type tells me (gathered from his own market research, of course) the state of the British music biz.

"There are these bands that we all call English Easy Listening—EEL. EEL music appeals to the English equivalent of yuppies." Admiring his Croolla trousers, he continues: "Since the whole phenomenon is really about a year old, we don't know yet if the American yuppies are going to go for it. Maybe by Christmas."

"Uh huh." And the American yuppies going to Britain this summer will get a jump on EEL. "What kinds of bands are, uh, EEL?"

"Oh, you know, Prefab Sprout, Sade . . . anything that goes down real easy but still thinks it has an edge. Pseudo-intellectual Muzak."

"It's a far cry from the Sex Pistols, isn't it? Remember when being British meant you had attitude?"

"Almost makes you nostalgic."

"Right now there's more attitude emanating from New Jersey."

I forgot to pack a blue denim jacket.

Jim Reid (singer): "I think the reason that people compare us to the Sex Pistols is that too many people are nostalgic. Just because we cause some kind of reaction doesn't mean we're the new anybody."

Douglas Hart (bassist): "It's just because people are so stuck in the past."

Jim: "We have no intention of being the new Sex Pistols. We wouldn't want to. We're better than them."

Oh the snot has caked against my pants
 It has turned into crystal
 There's a bluebird sitting on a branch
 I guess I'll take my pistol.
 —Love, "Live and Let Live"

The Jesus and Mary Chain is the sort of band that might be accused of having snot caked against their pants. Black leather pants. Ask them no questions and they'll tell you no lies.

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen. We're all 19."

Anyway, they're the sort of band that prefers to ask the questions themselves.

Bobby Gillespie (drummer): "What?! You've never heard of Love?"

Jim: "Is your mother-in-law really from Glasgow? Why don't you ask her what it's like there?"

"She's dead."

Jim: "You could get a spiritist to ask her."

"It's easier to ask you."

Jim: "Not really, 'cause we're awkward buggers, and we don't give a straight answer to a straight question."

We are at Alice in Wonderland. It's Monday night. On Wednesday the same place is called the Batcave, for which the management unplugs the psychedelic gel projection lamp. The Fuzztones make a retrograde, paisley-infested squall. Beer is cheap and fresh air is at a premium.

Douglas asks, "So what is it like in New York now? What clubs can you go to?"

"There's the Palladium."

"I heard about that, what's it like?"

"It's enormous, like Studio 54, only full of girls trying to look like Edie Sedgwick."

"I'm going."

That week in England, a musician's technical journal features an article on how the band makes its trademark feedback. You can imagine some impressionable youngster rushing out to buy all the equipment mentioned just in time to find out that the new 12-inch, "Just Like Honey," doesn't have any.

Jim: "Fifty percent of what we do is soft, slow, melodic, and acoustic. But nobody talks about it. People seem to be really fascinated by the feedback."

William Reid (guitarist): "We could have a full orchestra, with something like five violins."

Am I guided or is life for free
 Because nothing ever seems to happen to me
 And I won't be tempted by vile evils
 Because vile evils are vile evils . . .

—Subway Sect, "Ambition"

When the Jesus and Mary Chain hit 40, they probably won't be welcome in Las Vegas. They wouldn't fit in with the tanned, healthy retirees anyway. They usually look tired and thin, damp and dark, like their hometown, Glasgow.

You're most likely to run into one of them at the Virgin Megastore (London's equivalent of Tower Records) or any club in a basement. They like their clubs in basements. They also like to drink.

Douglas: "In order not to be bored while we're playing we either get really drunk or really drugged. It makes it much more exciting for us. Probably looks just the same for the audience, but it feels much better."

Bobby: "It would feel different if we were straight."

Jim: "We only do 20-minute sets. There's no band alive that's good enough to play for longer than 20 minutes."

"A few songs sounded vaguely familiar."

William: "How many songs sound vaguely familiar?"

"Three."

William: "Well, we only did two covers."

Jim: "Syd Barrett's 'Vegetable Man' and the Subway Sect's 'Ambition.' So you heard three vaguely familiar songs?"

"It must have been the Beach Boys cover."



Jim: "Psychotic Beach Boys!"

William: "We've been compared to the Beach Boys recently."

Jim: "It's probably more realistic than the Sex Pistols."

Bobby: "We want to be big and fat and have beards."

Douglas [rolls eyes]: "I don't know. . . ."

It's not how well you play your guitar, but how you play the game. First, the recipe. Dice one or two sides of Cramps, maybe *Songs the Lord Taught Us*, into 1-inch chunks, dump into blender. Peel one Tommy James single, preferably from a jukebox, and puree with the Cramps. Spread four chicken wings, each dressed identically, in an unwashed, rusted tray. Scrape mixture on top, and sprinkle with dried Velvet Underground. Bake until well done in a hot van. Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble. Serve with Chocolate Watchband and 1910 Fruitgum for dessert.

Jim: "We've been banned in places in Britain. Some people wouldn't let us play because our reputation's been exaggerated. One place refused to let us play because of something they read in the *Sun*."

William: "It's gotten in our way, stopped us from doing things—but it has gotten us noticed."

Douglas: "It's brought a hooligan element into the audiences. People read stuff and think, 'They're a really violent group, so let's go and be violent.' They go mad."

Pretty girls

Pretty boys

Have you ever heard your mama scream,
 "NOISE ANNOYS!"

—Buzzcocks

Slaughter Joe is a noisemaker of note. This winter he produced the Mary Chain's first 7-inch, "Upside Down," for Creation, Alan McGee's independent in the Postcard tradition. Since the band's signing to Blanco y Negro for their subsequent singles ("Never Understand," "You Trip Me Up," "Just Like Honey") and an album due in November, Joe has been guest distortionist for Jeffrey Lee Pierce, and for the Creation stable, an assistant in A&R, publicity, promotions, distribution, marketing, and drinking. He's an omnipotent nice guy, and last year the bands took him on tour.

"It was in Berlin. We were just really bored. We didn't know where our bus driver was, so various people from the different groups (the Jasmine Minks, Biff Bang Pow, and the Mary Chain) had gone into this street market. Me and Bobby Gillespie went off to a shop at the end of the street.

"They sold postcards, which we thought would be of nice scenes of the town. But they were pictures of East German guards on the Berlin Wall goose-stepping about—bombed houses were in the background. All the people looked like the guards in *Hogan's Heroes*, with wire glasses, funny teeth, and enormous hats. Each card was worse than the last.

"We bought heaps of them. We started writing big swastikas on them and stuff like, 'At present we are driving east but soon we will come to your England and we will destroy you.' While we were sitting in the post office, the driver, a German guy, showed up and saw what we were doing. He was absolutely horrified—speechless with loathing. He was acting like something out of a '50s postwar propaganda film, saying that it was illegal to send stuff like that through the mail. 'There is no more Gestapo here . . . I WAS NOT A NAZI!'

The Mary Chain have only been to the U.S. once, not counting childhood trips to Disneyland on family vacations. Planning to tour the States at Christmas, they already see one advantage to being born in the U.S.A.

Jim: "Trash TV."

Bobby: "Adverts for the *Weekly World News*."

Jim: "Did you know that there's a man who grows a heart every six months?"

Douglas: "A woman married her son."

Jim: "A man had a sex change and made himself pregnant."

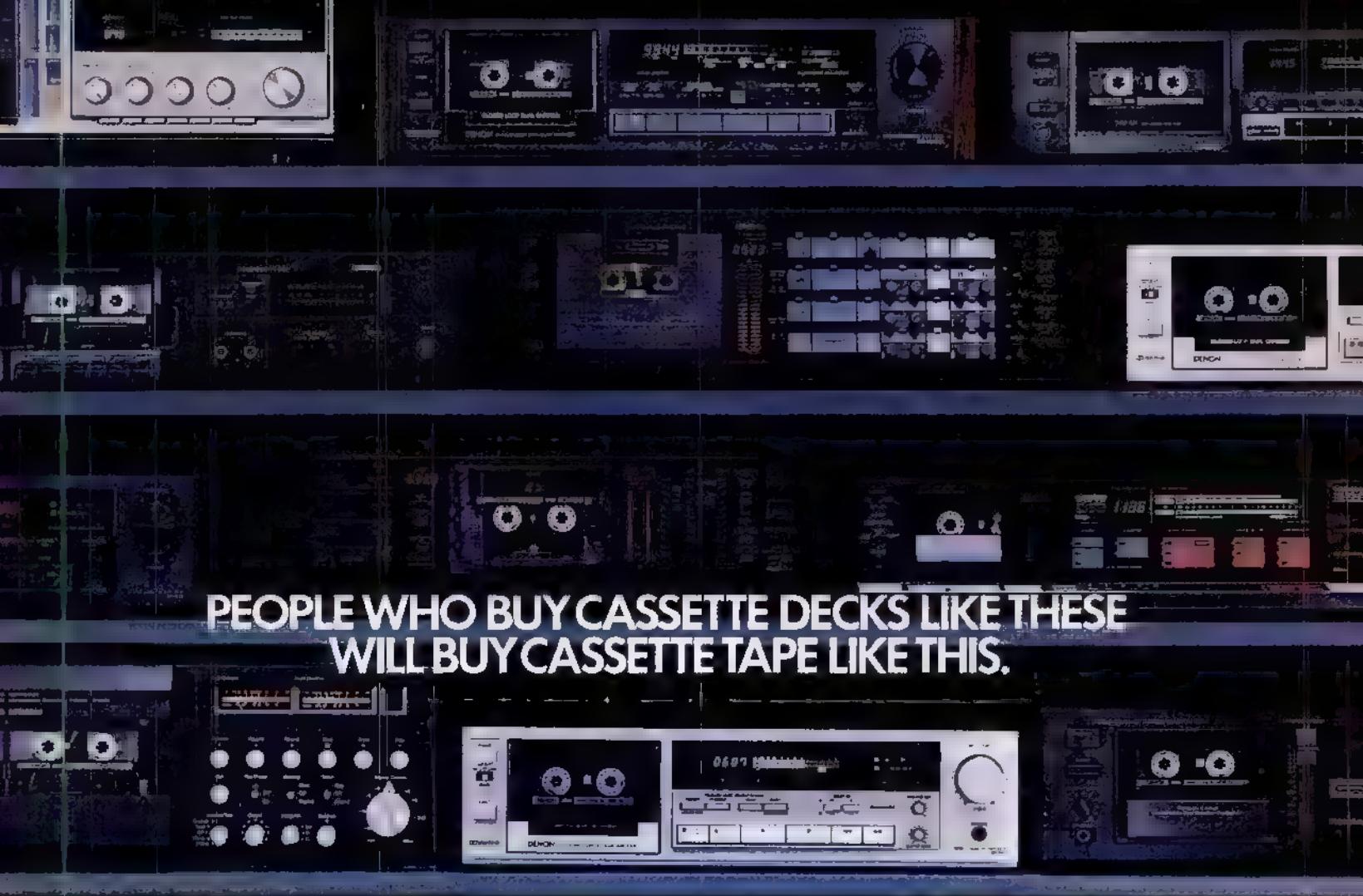
William: "That kidney advert was sick."

Douglas: "It was for donors. When there's a kidney available, people are fighting to get it. So it showed a picture of a kidney with two people tugging at it."

Jim: "It's a brilliant country!"

From the end of the world to your mall.

Above: the responsible parties: (L-R) Jim Reid, Douglas Hart, William Reid, and Bobby Gillespie.



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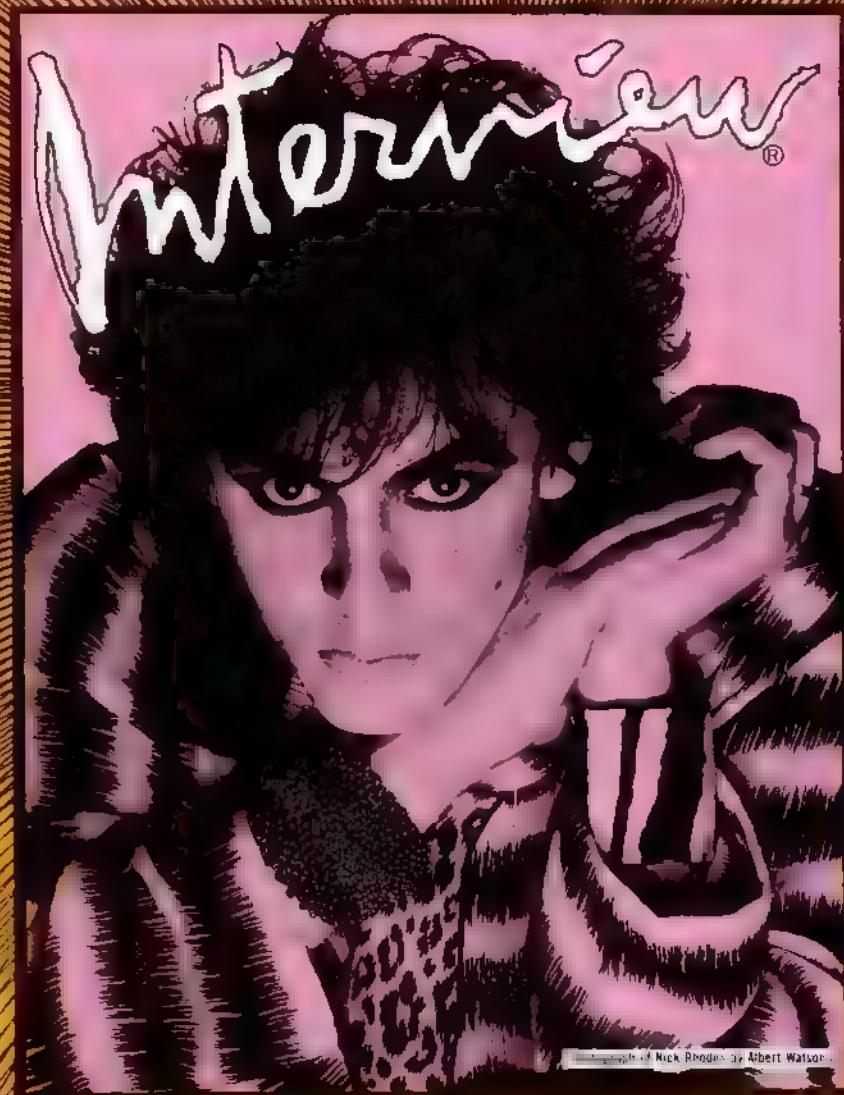
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D.St.

Being hip counts. Being hip sells records. And hip is from the South Bronx, but the master scratcher, who took hip hop from the subway to the charts, gets no respect. He ain't happy. The opening volley in the Hip Hop Wars.

Article by John Leland

D.St. is fuming. At the Roxy, the New York City club where he used to spin records, the black Conan at the door frisked him, then sent him through the club's metal detector. D.St.'s patented chains, Cazel shades, and Herbie Hancock Rockit Band tour badge meant nothing to the doorman.

"Over there, asshole!" shouts Conan. The record company people with us are worried.

"You almost saw a murder here tonight," D.St. tells his friend, DJ Nate, as we walk up the ramp into the club. (Later I learn he meant his own, not the bouncer's.) On top of this, he's disappointed in me because I didn't get the three-part handshake right. He sits quietly with his tall, slender date and Nate, oblivious to the journalists, label people, and liggers buzzing excitedly around him. Then we climb back into the car.

*Like the way we split our jeans
We split our world at the seams
Someone call the space limousine . . .*
George Clinton booms out of the stereo of the crowded limo as we zoom north toward Disco Fever, one of the first and most powerful rap clubs in the South Bronx. We're off to play D.St.'s new single, "The Home of Hip Hop," at the source. Liquor from the limo's bar is on the breaths and clothing of most of the passengers. Some French blonde's head

is on my chest. The television flickers incoherently.

We turn off the highway onto industrial Jerome Avenue.

"Ze South Bronx, some heavy sheet," says the blonde.

At the Fever, a giant, bearded man asks me if I'm the driver and how much it costs to rent one of these monstrous machines for a night. D.St. spots a friend outside the door. He presses skin with the tall, bearded man, who is wearing a straw hat, shades, white denim pants and jacket over a red shirt, and high-top Nikes. "This is the man my record is dedicated to," he says. "This is Kool Herc." Herc is a local legend, the DJ who started hip hop more than a decade ago but who now has faded into obscurity. He sips on a small bottle of Moët champagne through a straw. Before we enter the club, D.St. gives him two test pressings of the new record.

On the rainy sidewalk outside Disco Fever, the godfather of hip hop receives tribute from his most illustrious pupil. D.St. is one of the originals. He, too, was there when it all started. With Kool Herc, he helped define the style, the look, the sound that became hip hop. In the last two years, D.St. helped take Herbie Hancock back to the street with the scratching on "Rockit" that gave Hancock a gold record. D.St. has been the king of the block, the most dynamic exponent of pure



Ted Baron

Bronx get-over style, since the days when that was all that mattered. But while he was out touring the world with the Rockit Band, the block suddenly got a lot bigger. The competition—new bloods like Run-D.M.C., Whodini, the Fat Boys, and U.T.F.O.—have taken the lead, changed the rules; hip hop has gone to the suburbs. Now D.St. is back, and he has to prove himself all over again. His response to the suburban turks is to take the music back to the streets.

Sign at the door of Disco Fever:
EVERYONE "MUST PAY"
ALL JUICE HAVE BEEN
"CUT."

One of the three uniformed security guards lets four of us through the metal grating and into the vestibule and locks the door behind us. Another frisking, but D.St. takes it in stride. "They're so much cooler about it here," he says. The guard lets in the next four.

Another sign:
\$4.00 LADIES
\$7.00 CENTS
\$10.00 WITH SNEAKERS.

A third sign, in the near-deserted main room at the top of the stairs, says NO DANCING. Half the customers, lit by blinking Christmas tree-type lights, stare lazily at a silent TV image of Grace Jones

spearing some sucker in *Conan the Destroyer*. The other half stare at us. D.St. says hello to most of the people in the club, but doesn't say much more to anyone. Nate slips back to the limo with a woman. The DJ spins K-Rob into the imitation stone-walled room, rapping and singing over the instrumental breaks.

This is the home of hip hop? Certain there must be more, we scurry down a narrow hallway to an unventilated back room. A half-dozen people sit in the stifling heat among video games and an electronic one-armed bandit, inertly watching *Conan* with the sound on. Back to the main room—in a hurry. D.St. approaches the DJ booth with two copies of his record. After a few words of salutation, the jock starts cutting it up. And then it begins:

Lees, Carterfields, and sneakers
Shades on our heads so we could spot
the breakers

Hip hop from the Bronx, New York
Where we say "yes, y'all" before
we talk

At one time other boroughs were not
even rockin'

The Bronx was the known spot for hip
hoppin'

Other towns came from miles around
Just to see the boogie-down Bronx
throw down . . .

The Bronx is the home of hip hop
We don't care what anybody says
It's been avoided and exploited
But it will never be taken away.
The opening volley in the hip hop wars.

To talk to D.St., you first have to talk to

his mother. "Who is this?" Then: "Derek!" At 24, with two global tours and the "Rockit" gold record under his belt, the world's most famous and best scratch DJ still lives at home with his mother, his brother Leroy, his niece Emily, and a black feline named Morris. When his mother calls him to the phone, he answers, "Peace." (So, incidentally, does Afrika Bambaataa, who lives down the street.)

D.St. is a hard man to run down. He canceled our first interview and a photo session because, according to his publicist, he got bronchitis from the air conditioning in the limousine. He simply forgot the second one. Finally, all systems go for a third try. Me and photoboy settle down for a long subway ride to Baychester Avenue in the Bronx. The ride is mostly above ground, past abandoned buildings decorated with vibrant graffiti. When we arrive at the housing project where D.St. lives, he's not there.

"Come in," says Mrs. Showard, his mother. "He's on his way."

She looks very young. Gliding silently on terry cloth slippers, she offers us colas, which she rests on wood-and-cork coasters.

"That's Derek, he's always slow. Very, very slow."

We wait.

The small apartment is neatly decorated. We sit on plastic slipcovers on a white, S-shaped couch, surrounded by Japanese Kabuki prints, an ornamental gong, silk flowers, a Hammond organ, and a decorative samurai sword. A gold copy of Herbie Hancock's *Future Shock* album hangs on a wall near the kitchen, where *The Rockford Files* plays unattended. D.St.'s brother beats the prodigal home.

"Say hello, 'Roy,'" says Mrs. Showard. At last D.St. arrives, carrying the first copies of "The Home of Hip Hop" in their actual jackets. On the cover he's in a leopard-skin coat. He's obviously pleased with the image.

"Being hip counts," he says, slipping on his sunglasses. "Being hip sells records."

Hip indeed. On a sweltering summer afternoon, D.St. is togged in an electric-red Adidas warm-up suit, Adidas high-tops with fat red laces—tucked, not tied—and a black doo rag under a white Adidas baseball hat. Two loops of gold chain dangle from his left ear, three more from his neck. He wears a dozen rubber bracelets and two watches—one studded with more diamonds than Rosalind Russell ever dreamed of. The Herbie Hancock tour badge still dangles from his belt.

We move to his room. Like the Fever, it tells more about him than anything he could possibly say. "Rockit," "Megamix," "Crazy Cuts," and other record jackets are stapled overlapping each other on the door. A dozen colored vinyl discs hang on the walls, along with a collection of baseball caps, pictures of his mother, and his brother's high school diploma. The small room is jammed with state-of-the-art electronic equipment from Japan: multitrack mixing board, reel-to-reel deck, editing machine, digital mastering deck, P.A. system, studio monitors, a bank of keyboards. A full recording studio in a tiny bedroom. Plus hundreds of rec-



Jeff Gutumen



Josh Cheuse

ords—classics like *Bongo Rock*, by the Incredible Bongo Band, and *The Baby Huey Story*, by Baby Huey and the Babysitters—a tropical fish tank, and a twin bed (made). The room bristles with attitude and style, with history—with 24 years in the life of Derek Shaward.

"This is all for hip hop," he says, extending his arms in a gesture that fills the room. "Everything I do is hip hop. I'm hip hop."

As he fidgets with the buttons and dials on the recording console, we try to pin down just what that means.

"The people that you hear now," he says, "are not from hip hop. Hip hop is from the Bronx, and to be from hip hop you have to have lived it. Hip hop is the way we lived. There was a way that we did things and a way that we innovated the whole hip-hop thing. We didn't get

"Every teenager here carried a pistol. But I never killed anyone. My mom found the gun, so I had to get rid of it."

pieces of it from here and there. It was our fad, our style, our way of living. Just like in Brooklyn: you got the Brooklyn accent, that's their thing. You go to D.C., they got go go music, that's the way they live. And for us, it's hip hop.

"You can make rap records," he continues. "Most of these cats came around when they heard about rap records. And they're good—as rappers. But there's a difference between living hip hop and just

being a part of it. It's easy to say [oh yeah?], but it's a major difference.

"It's like this," he says finally, pointing to a spotless, impeccably half-laced sneaker.

D.St. is obsessed with history. That's why he lives at home, and why he made "The Home of Hip Hop," a throwdown about the early days when the Bronx had a monopoly on the sound:

Can you remember the days when Kool Herc played

With the following of bands

Cause if you don't, well then you won't

That's right. The real hip hop, my man.

"A lot of the original hip hoppers," he explains, "aren't getting the recognition they should get. None of the new cats give Kool Herc any. And he is the godfather. The first sound any of us DJs heard was Kool Herc. Had to be '73, a place called Hevalo. I was 13. But I never first heard hip hop. That's the difference between me, Grandmaster Flash, Afrika Bambaataa, Kool Herc, Grand Wizard Theodore, Cool DJ A.J., and the cats who are popular today: we didn't first hear it. We lived it. Don't ask me about Malcolm McLaren."

For D.St., living it meant dealing three-card monte on Delancey Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side when he was in junior high. That's where he got his name, from the abbreviation for the subway stop. Living hip hop meant missing geometry class at Truman High. "The rap thing was just starting to come into the hip-hop scene. Me and Rahiem [from the Furious Five] used to sit outside at lunch break and think up rhymes. We missed a lot of classes.

"I was always a radical at school," he remembers. "I was always against what everybody else was for. I wasn't down with the cats because I didn't get high. I don't smoke or drink. I never even tried reefer. And I didn't do it because they tried to force it on me."

For a while, living hip hop also meant packing a pistol. "At one point," he says, "every teenager here carried a pistol. But I never killed anyone. My mom found it one day, and that was it. She had a fit, so I had to get rid of it."

In '74, D.St. began spinning. Or "backspinning." Scratching had not yet come on the scene, but DJs would extend drum breaks by repeating them on two turntables. D.St. was a drummer, but he saw that a DJ like Herc had more pull than any of the bands. As Grand Mixer D.St., he worked parties and parks. When scratching broke out, he put his indelible mark on the music.

"I don't know who started it, and I'm not going to say I did, because I didn't. But the one credit I will take is that I set the standard for scratching. Being in the pocket counts; being on time is major. And that's what I did. I used my drumming ability to make it more rhythmic. I can write what I scratch. The pace I set is the pace to go by if you're going the right way. Now everyone's scratching the way I do, or trying.

"When I did 'Rockit,' no one believed that was scratching, because it was too perfect, too computerized, too digital. Because scratching people tend to fall out of the pocket."

"Rockit" was a rare, visionary collab-

oration in which the principals never even met. Hancock hired Bill Laswell, who had just produced D.St.'s first single, to create a new, streetwise sound. The two met at the Roxy, where D.St. was spinning. Hancock flew back to Los Angeles, leaving Laswell to produce all but his final synthesizer tracks. When D.St. got the call from Laswell, he remembers, "I thought it was a drum gig. I was thinking jazz." With just a sketchy idea of what Hancock's main part would be and a green light from the producer, D.St. created a percussive scratch track that set the pace for the whole song and the robotic, mechanical tone for the video. Hancock didn't know what he was getting into—D.St. put him over big. The two finally met after the album was finished, when D.St. was performing at the Club Lingerie in Los Angeles. Hancock sent a car around to get him.

Touching a few solenoid switches on the console, D.St. plays a rough mix from his upcoming album, a funk-rock cut that's waiting for a scratch track.

"Derek!"

"OK," he says, and closes the soundproofed door. His bedroom now also doubles as headquarters and studio for D.Street Productions, on which he plans to record new Bronx artists and bring back Kool Herc.

Through "Rockit" and the band's marathon world tours, D.St. has infiltrated a broader audience than anyone in hip hop. Wherever he's gone, he's taken the Bronx with him. But the Bronx, which once owned the beat, is slipping into the past. Emcees no longer rap about what great lays they are or how much cash money they have, which was the classic Bronx style. Community groups are trying to close Disco Fever. Even Bambaataa takes an uncharacteristically insecure swipe at Run-D.M.C. on his new single.

"The actual Bronx music has faded out almost totally," D.St. says sadly. "The radio people just don't play Bronx artists. They don't play Melle Mel—never. But it's also the Bronx artists—what are they doing, what are they thinking about? I don't know, but it's not positive.

"It will never die for us because it wasn't a fad; it's the way we live. This is my home. Eventually I'll be able to buy a house in the Bronx. I don't want to be too far from the source. I like to be local. I have friends here. I'm tight with the little kids, which is great, because I'm not a bad guy. I have a few enemies. Don't ask me why."

D.St. puts his Cazal sunglasses back on and walks us out to the street, stopping to promise autographed copies of his record to a family seated on lawn chairs on the sidewalk. A teenaged girl with cornrows is especially thrilled.

"I'm not a star," he says. "A lot of people are intimidated and don't even talk to me. But I still walk outside, I sit in the park, I play two-hand touch. I used to work at McDonald's. And I used to say, 'I'm in the music business and I'm going to make it someday.' And they'd say, 'Right, that's why you're working at McDonald's.' I went for it. I tried. I didn't want to be on the corner selling reefer."

As D.St. goes off on the hardships of being black, we make our adieus. This time he fucks up the handshake.



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Red Hot Chili Peppers
(and Cold War critics),
Jello Biafra,
Wynton Marsalis

SPINS



Edited by Rudy Langlais



Courtesy of Levine

Platter du Jour

Nick Lowe and his Cowboy Outfit

The Rose of England
Columbia

It's been a very long, hard career for Nick Lowe. Since he and schoolmate Brinsley Schwarz formed such bands as Sounds 4 Plus 1 and Kippington Lodge as early as 1963, Lowe has always worked with many different artists and groups as performer, producer, writer, and general architect of pop wisdom. In the early '70s, as a member of the "pub-rock" sensation Brinsley Schwarz, Lowe and his cohorts were being touted as the next big thing.

Since then Lowe has continued to be regarded as a major talent, but he never really became as well known as he deserves to be. While his production for such artists as Graham Parker, the Pretenders, the Fabulous Thunderbirds, and Elvis Costello (for whom he produced six albums) has gained him respect among his peers, and "Cruel to Be Kind," from his second solo album, *Labor of Lust*, was a near hit, his partnership with David Edmunds in Rockpile was as close as he ever came to hitting the big time in America. With *The Rose of England*, Lowe again tries real hard to grab the ears of American music lovers.

This is the second album that he's released featuring his latest band, Cowboy Outfit. Comprised of keyboardist Paul Carrack (Ace, Roxy Music, Squeeze), guitarist Martin Belmont (the Rumour), and drummer Bobby Irwin (the Sinceros), Cowboy Outfit is a tight little group that plays a soulfully pop brand of rockabilly that sounds like it's coming from a sleazy rock/R&B band on a Saturday night, with Phil Spector producing the final mix.

The album opens with Lowe's 1977 "I Knew the Bride (When She Used to Rock 'n' Roll)," which he first played on Dave Edmunds's *Cut It* and sang in concert with Rockpile. Backed by Huey Lewis's the News, it lacks the kick of either Edmunds's or Rockpile's version but affords Lowe a chance to redo one of his best songs with a popular American backing group and again test chart waters.

On "She Don't Love Nobody," Lowe goes back to his '60s pop sound, and although this album doesn't match the tour-de-force crush of his heavily '60s solo debut, *Pure Pop for Now People*, it spotlights Lowe

delivering a pastiche of styles. He changes gears on Moon Mulligan's '50s-styled rocker "7 Nights to Rock" and then waltzes into the dance-band instrumental "Long Walk Back," playing some nifty guitar licks. With the addition of former Rumour member Bob Andrews on bass and Nick Pentelow on sax, you wish these guys played weddings.

From here on, Lowe bares his soul. The sad caricature of him on the album cover and the long list of heartbroken song titles, such as "Indoor Fireworks," "(Hope to God) I'm Right," and "I Can Be the One You Love," all appear to express Lowe's feelings about his breakup with his ex-wife, Carlene Carter. The title cut is a midtempo song with a melancholy edge that again brings back some of the '60s pop touches of *Pure Pop for Now People*. The song even occasionally brings to mind the curt pop irony of Lowe's "Marie Provost."

Side one closes and side two opens with two upbeat and light-hearted rockers, before Lowe delves into the more reflective side of his apparently broken heart. Elvis Costello's "Indoor Fireworks" (written for Lowe) is a sparse ballad that quietly and unobtrusively builds into a lush, Spectrosh, country-sounding pop wonder. On the next few tracks, Lowe continues his nod to the innocent country and rock sounds of the late '50s and early '60s. "I Can Be the One You Love," "(Hope to God) I'm Right," and "Everyone" recall the roots rock and catchy choruses of the Everly Brothers and will surely send Nick Lowe purists rushing to buy the EP of the Everly Brothers songs he recorded with Dave Edmunds on *Seconds of Pleasure*. Lowe closes out with a bluesy and silly track called "Bobo Ska Diddle Diddle," reminding us all that it's only music.

So ends another long-playing chapter in the miraculous and obscure career of Nick Lowe. Another step closer to rock stardom, or another brilliant and blind attempt in vain. As long as the charts are not the sole place a great musician is judged, Nick Lowe won't be all dressed up with nowhere to go.

—Steve Matteo



The Three O'Clock Arrive Without Travelling I.R.S.

After an EP and an album on the small Frontier label, the Three O'Clock have put it all on the line with their first official semi-big-label release. You either love the Three O'Clock or hate them—there's no middle ground. People are either ecstatic about their retro pop or think they're a bunch of wimps. The band has come along at a time when '60s culture and music are a growing part of the pop scene. From Prince's paisley platter, *Around the World in a Day*, to the blatantly retrograde Plasticland, psychedelia has begun to creep into the mainstream. The Three O'Clock's music, now more than ever, has the '60s and pop written all over it—for good or for bad.

Even though I like this album, it isn't the most satisfying record I've heard. It starts out too weak, the first two tracks, "Her Head's Revolving" and "Each and Every Lonely Heart," veering too close to the bombast of such mid-to-late-'70s pop groups as Sweet and Cheap Trick. But after the first two tracks, the album starts going somewhere. On "Underwater," 21-year-old lead singer and principal songwriter Michael Quercio begins to show what a unique and enthusiastic artist he is. His odd-pitched vocal inflections sound as if they're coming out of the mouth of some Northern European who grew up on a rich diet of Merseybeat music. There are also moments that recall the distinctive vocal style of Feargal Sharkey. "Underwater" is pure pop—complete with jangling guitars, perky keyboards, and hooky choruses. Quercio's superb vocals and Mike Mariano's churchy keyboards make "Mrs. Green"

the group's best chance to hit the charts, and "Hand in Hand" reveals not only how much potential they have as songwriters and arrangers but also indicates that they don't always have to lean so heavily on their reinterpretation of '60s pop.

On "Knowing When You Smile" Quercio comes up with a very ambitious vocal arrangement, and on "Half the Way There" they recreate the sugary-sweet pop of the Rascals, the Mamas and the Papas, and the Archies. I guess that in order to really appreciate this music, you have to have seen the *I Dream Of Jeannie* episodes with Phil Spector and Boyce and Hart.

"The Girl With the Guitar" is a heady acoustic outing with Quercio in a mellow-yellow mood, and the closer "Spun Gold," is the grand pop finale. This group is definitely into making pure pop. Call it wimpy, unpretentious, joyous, retrograde, groovy, or uplifting, the Three O'Clock's music is going somewhere.

—Steve Matteo



II.

Glenn O'Brien, who thought he was too busy to review this album, responds:

1. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!
2. I still don't see what the San Diego Padres pitching staff being into the John Birch Society has to do with this album.
3. What Afro-comb?
4. Did James Brown write "Fame" by David Bowie and John Lennon?

5. Motley Crue's *Theater of Pain* might have been a more honest *œuvre* of the feelings of white youth, but . . . wait, does *œuvre* mean work or egg?

7. I know it's easy to assume that when George Clinton produces a record, that's sort of a euphemism his accountant thought up for his *making* one, but actually the Red Hot Chili Peppers had something to do with the making of their own record.

11. This album is great.

15. Isn't it hard keeping track of all those reservations about something while you're dancing?

19. Did John Denver really write "Country Roads" by Toots and the Maytals?

60. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but not when it comes to twenty-dollar bills.

71. Songs are not really funk or hardcore or polkas. These abstract terms were invented only for use in clothing stores and should not be applied to a band called the Red Hot anything.

99. Hey, kids, listen, this is really one of the best albums ever. It's like Archie Bell and the Drells, Led Zeppelin, Lenny Bruce, and the Martha and the Vandellas Fan Club and everything. Listen: This guy Richard Gehr—man, I walked by his office the other night, and I don't know what

Dépeche Mode sounds like, but from the sound coming through that door it was either that or like drag queens in love on mood elevators playing the synthesizer their parents bought them, which might also double as collateral for the operation.

2010. Nyuk nyuk nyuk.

—Glenn O'Brien

Richard Gehr, who never ceases to be amazed at the wrath of a rock critic scorned, gets the last word:

"Pops" O'Brien drooled over these guys in the first issue of this magazine, which I suppose is why he takes my brilliant 300-word record review so seriously. You see, way back then he wrote that the Red Hot Chili Peppers are "the greatest rock band in the world" because they kick ass live (true) and recorded a "forceful, natty, and sly album: *Real Men Don't Kill Coyotes* (EMI Records)." And, hey, his well-considered argument even convinced me; regrettably, however, there's nothing particularly "forceful, natty, or sly" about *Freaky Styley*. Now, I'm not saying something's weird with O'Brien's earholes or anything, but it does occur to me that a guy who mistakes the *Dub Syndicate's* *Tunes From the Missing Channel* for *Dépeche Mode* probably wouldn't recognize boring ersatz black braggadocio in a mock mothership styley if it was sent to him in a promo package from EMI. But of course I exaggerate. Nyuk.



Red Hot Chili Peppers Freaky Styley EMI America/Enigma

Welcome to the Day-Glo minstrel show, bro, brought to you by the baddest posse of white funk puppies west of the mighty Mississippi. These Peppers seem way eager for you to know just how freaky bad they be, so they've beamed George Clinton, the Salvador Dali of funk, down from the Mothership to nudge the knobs on their behalf.

Unfortunately, a display of good taste in producers ain't enough. Frank Zappa produced Grand Funk Railroad, for god-

sakes. This record sure sorta sounds like a P-Funk package—it's full of acidic, throbbing campaigns, laced with metallic guitar fills—but its attitude is strictly Hollywood High, and answers that eternal question: what's black and white and rude all over?

The Peppers just want to return to some primordial ooze (they've even got Fred Wesley's Horny Horns to help 'em), which is why the album's first three cuts be about life in the concrete jungle. "Jungle Man" might be a funk hagiography of Chili Pepper bassist Flea Balzary, who's known to have some aboriginal blood running through his veins. This precedes a Meters cover, "Hollywood (Africa)," and "American Ghost Dance," an angry song about the genocide of Native Americans by our (white) forefathers.

These days, contending blackness imitators gotta fill out their set with signifyin' monkey business concerning their own bad selves. The Peppers reply to the challenge with "The Brothers Cup," "Freaky Styley," and "Nevermind" ("Nevermind the Pac Jam / Nevermind the Gap Band / Nevermind the Zap Band / Nevermind the funk scam," etc.), though these three songs mercilessly lift licks from the aforementioned. The biggest lift of all, other than that of the P-Funk sound, is the Peppers' all-too-faithful cover of Sly Stone's "If You Want Me to Stay" (someone has sweetly etched "For Sly with love" on the vinyl's inner groove).

Other weirdness: little filler droppings ("Thirty Dirty Birds," "Sex Rap," "Loving and Touchin'") dot the horizon, while a couple hardcore throwaways ("Catholic School Girls Rule," "Battleship") seem to be included for hometown (L.A.) appeal.

Personal favorite: the Peppers' funkified version of "Yertle the Turtle," even though they drop the ending from Dr. Seuss's moral fable.

The results here, you could say, are remixed, while the question lingers as to why any bunch of dudes from ethnic group A would so doggedly simulate the stylistic idiosyncrasies of ethnic group B. I thought about that a lot while listening to this record, but after spinning it enough times, the answer, like the spiral groove thang itself, hardly seemed worth considering. Here's a hint anyway, just for fun: What's left when you remove the "F" from P-Funk?

—Richard Gehr





The Meatmen

War of the Superbikes

Homestead

Out of the slimy tank of consumerist/conformist American youth culture they come, like a breath of stale air in an already putrid room. They ride on loud, ugly motorcycles out of a post-teenage wasteland illuminated by the unhealthy blue glow of a flickering television set and nourished by Twinkies, Cheese Combos, and Fudgie the Whale cakes. Their goal: to crudely go where no man has gone before.

They come to seek revenge on society for their already wasted lives by holding up a cruel funhouse mirror and forcing society to look. They come to pillage, to wreak havoc on the underwear drawers of a decaying world. They come to offend. They come to amuse. They come wielding limp moral fibers and room temperature IQs. They come because they want the world. They're the Meatmen . . . and you suck.

Without a doubt, the Meatmen are on the cutting edge of the punk/metal/flamenco/comedy movement. After an unimaginative and humorlessly gross debut LP, they've dumped a wonderfully bad pile of sonic feces on our unsuspecting heads with *War of the Superbikes*, smearing their coarse debasement of everything we hold in low esteem across the embarrassment that passes as our collective consciousness.

The Meatmen are the brainchild (or brainstillbirth) of new wave casualty Tesco Vee. Flanked by guitarists Lyle Preslar and Brian Baker of the late Minor Threat, the meat master goes after the easy targets, the ones that our latently reactionary society viciously strips of all dignity and then defends with self-righteous liberal aplomb. The Meatmen attack gays, women, blacks, cripples, ABBA, punks, Ricardo Montalban, Ann-Margret, talk-show hosts, and cadavers. Tesco Vee is a satirist, but not a moralist. To him, everything is sacred, and everything is worthy of defilement.

On *War of the Superbikes* his aim is dead on. He takes on skinheads and peace punks on the fake game show "Punker-AMA," in which nonviolent contestant Bambi takes a beating for licking the Clitboys. On the flamencoid "Kisses in the Sunset," he lovingly describes the private parts of his flame in terms usually reserved for Chrysler Cordobas. On the title track, he sends his two-wheeled competition on an ultra-cool macho ride: "All he saw was a burning, hurtling ball of death as he / Blasted

off into the cool night air / Just him and his GS 1150." He dedicates a sensitive reading of the Pagans' "What's This Shit Called Love" to "The first time I ever planted my veined, swollen blood bomber in Ann-Margret's winking-pink brownie cake."

Crude? Offensive? Indefensible? All these and more. But this record is so utterly lacking in moral content that it's impossible to surmise that Tesco believes in anything, let alone these ridiculous blasphemies. And besides, it's a stone gas. Even more brilliantly useless is the accompanying flexidisc, a collection of fake radio ads for the album that wallows somewhere beneath the lowest depth of consumer manipulation. In an age when you never know whether you'll get your money's worth out of a record, *War of the Superbikes* guarantees that you won't.

—John Leland



AP/Wide World

Jello Biafra et al.

The Witch Trials

Alternative Tentacles

There's a school of Jungian psychology that maintains that as mankind divests itself of its myths, superstitions, and folklore, the archetypal patterns of these myths manifest themselves in human behavior. If this is the case, then these guys are the modern incarnation of those legendary night demons who snatch young children and drag them into the nether regions of hell.

Although this record doesn't list musician credits, the notorious Jello Biafra and several of his associates bear responsibility for the vinyl document. *The Witch Trials* is the most evil record I've ever been associated with," claims Biafra. I have to agree. It's totally unlike his work with the Dead Kennedys. Biafra improvised most of the vocals here, spewing surreal nightmares fraught with socio-political overtones over a zombie pulse of electronic ugliness.

Aside from the talented Biafra, the other secret musicians are Christian Lurch on synthesizers, Morgan Fischer on electric bass (although he's a keyboard player), and Adrian Borland and Dead Kennedy East Bay Ray on guitars. Aside from song

titles on the label and minimal cryptic scrawlings on the back cover, the album was released with virtually no promotion and no information. The front cover features a high contrast black-and-white photo of several figures hanging from gallows. Nothing about this package makes any sense, but it's somehow very droll and funny.

"Trapped in the Playground" kicks off with a semi-funky fuzz-tone slapback echo guitar over which sneering vocals, apparently by Agent Orange mutants, rant for revenge. Incredibly outraged yet funny lines ooze like pus from the defoliant-endered cripples: "The elephant man poses nude in our centerfold / You poisoned our parents and forgot about birth control . . . We're marching on the White House / On crutches / In our wheelchairs / We're raping your conscience / We're fondling your daughters . . ." And that's not all! The song goes on to indict all

way due to some quirky mistake.

Side two (the side with the groovy bat design) begins with a free-association story entitled "Humanoids From the Deep" that's based on the 1979 movie of the same name. It involves (still more) mutants, these emerging from slimy chemical residue dumped in some creek by Del Monte ("You remember Del Monte, the logo's out of date") as waste products from genetic engineering experiments on salmon. The resulting mutant monsters erupt downstream to terrorize the Marin County Fair, chomping off the leg of the fair's queen and ripping everyone to shreds. Brace yourselves for the humanoids from the deep.

The record ends with "The Taser," a tale about a live demonstration by the LAPD of this newfangled weapon, which supposedly induces seizures in its victims/targets. (The taser shoots an electronically charged dart, rendering the victim temporarily paralyzed from electric shock.) The taser demonstration features Clyde, a convicted bank robber and child molester who is set free to run through a live audience in an attempt to escape the dart. The surprise ending and ensuing chaos are worth the price of the record.

Despite the album's geeky homemade quality, despite the lack of any coherent information on the sleeve, and despite the absolutely crazed and improvisational character of the disc, it is a fabulously unique and beautiful piece of vinyl. More discs of this kind ought to be created in order to rot the minds of little children everywhere. Send me more, Jello!

—John Trubee



Wynton Marsalis

Black Codes (From the Underground)

Columbia

Young Wynton Marsalis is already a kind of touchstone of contemporary jazz. Whenever his name comes up, "You can tell where people are at by where they coming from on Wynton." And there is wisdom to it.

Meaning: Wynton is a cause célèbre of the music. One reason is that there are so many reasons! The son of an estimable jazz man, in fact, a jazz family, residing, where else? New Orleans, naturally!

His father, Ellis, a very swinging and thoughtful post-Hines con-blues pianist, a contemporary of drummer Eddie Blackwell, Ornette's man, and linked with

wire



train

"makes
within"
Robert Hilburn, L.A. Times
"hall"
David Gans, The Record
"swim"
Dan Montgomery, Creem
"in"
Bono, U2
"roll"
Paul Weller, Style Council
"Peter Buck, REM

wire train's new album,
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on 415/columbia records.

the legendary New Orleans clarinetist Alvin Battiste.

Branford Marsalis, Wynton's older brother, is one of the freshest sounds on tenor come along in quite a few minutes. Right now, he is deep in Wayne Shorter's musical debt, and like most other contemporary tenor players, linked indissolubly to the great new-music revolutionary, John Coltrane.

Another important factor in Wynton Marsalis's rise is his virtuosity, instrumental facility, and technical skill on the trumpet, a notoriously difficult instrument. When Marsalis won Grammy awards in both jazz and European classical music as instrumentalist, the awe that greeted his accomplishment suggested that this was such a great feat because blacks, of course, are too underdeveloped to deal with European concert music.

Wynton himself told me a year or so ago that since he came to New York, he had come to appreciate that there were many seasoned blues and jazz trumpets who, with a bare few notes, create a hot artifact of undeniable skill. A kind of antithesis to Wynton's thousand-note attack.

In published interviews and television programs he has shown himself to be at times both courageous, albeit certainly not errorless, as well as deeply knowledgeable about music—European and African American. Live, he has been sometimes stimulating and electric, sometimes strangely dispirited, as he was at Carnegie Hall, perhaps in reaction to an amazing solo by Jimmy Owens. At another appearance in a New York loft, with Lester Bowie's Brass Fantasy, he was measured and fresh.

Certain critics have categorized Wynton's efforts as "imitations" of Davis, Gillespie, Clifford Brown, perhaps. But Marsalis has rejoindered, and I think rightly so, that if he didn't sound like them dudes, he probably wasn't playing jazz!

Yet Wynton is an interesting and inventive player. What one wants to hear now, as Pres would say, is his own story.

This album is mostly middle-period-Miles-sounding, the feeling like that of those records with Miles on flugelhorn. The tendency towards mood-feeling encountered in *Hot House Flowers* is maintained, though at times the "dreaminess" and aural ambience is stung or penetrated by Wynton's moving reflections on the hot.

The pieces on this album seem in the main to form part of what feels like a single mood. They are coolish, Milesian to be sure but with not a little of the Shorter-Blakey collaboration. The title tune, "Delfeayo's Dilemma," and "Phryzzian Man" are linked by this emphasis. What moved me was "Chambers of Tain," which carries both the mood and the funk, a Jackie Mc-type move, with most of Wynton's solo highlights, full of that piercing brass heat that Wynton can command, keening and telling the wailer's tale.

There is a feeling that Wynton is searching for a signature, a clear and hip persona. That is the hope, because Wynton on fire can be very, very hot.

—Amiri Baraka



Camper Van Beethoven
Telephone Free Landslide Victory
Independent Project Records

The members of Camper Van Beethoven live way out west in a dingy city called Redlands in the desert east of Los Angeles. Like Arizona's Meat Puppets or such harbingers of the New Sincerity as are found in Athens, Austin, and other out-of-the-way places that begin with the letter A, they've had more than enough time to consider their fate. *Telephone Free Landslide Victory* is Camper Van Beethoven's initial vinyl response to life and hard times on the West Coast, where buffalo no longer roam and the beaches aren't as nice as you've heard. To achieve emotional stability, they take little mental vacations in the form of swinging instrumentals (about half of the record's 18 ditties) interspersed with dreamy fantasies about pals and pets, as well as semicomforting, semihaunting apprehensions of life lived in the meandering lane.

Nine brilliant instrumentals dot the landscape. A couple whirl by in a Tex-Mex ska vein ("Border Ska," "Yankee Go Home"), while others take their cue from the Eastern bloc ("Vladivostok," "Balalaika Gap"). But ersatz though they be (you wouldn't expect Oriental traditionalism from a song titled "Mao Reminisces About His Days in Southern China," would you?), a simple legs-up-on-the-porch-railing feeling prevails.

The group's vocals are an entirely different parcel of pleasures. Consistently less embarrassing than 95 percent of the world's collected white pop vocalists, Camper Van Beethoven's warbling tends to be as naive as their tunes are hilarious (not to mention perceptive). I mean, talk about naive, these guys can make Jonathan Richman sound like Mel Torme.

While the group occasionally sings about hanging your head out the window and wondering about the utter uselessness of it all ("Ambiguity Song," "Oh No!"), they also respond to the available trends of the day. "Wasted" anachronistically covers the Black Flag song, while "Where the Hell Is Bill" is a country-and-western shuffle that makes ugly insinuations about a former CVB drummer late for rehearsal ("Well, maybe he went to get a mohawk / Or maybe he went to get some gnarly thrash boots"). "Skinhead Stomp" is another ska-like instrumental that sets the stage for the record's obvious hit, "Take the Skinheads Bowling," a dream about waking up and finding skinheads on your lawn because "everybody's coming home for lunch

these days." "The Day Lassie Went to the Moon" is another dream, a psychedelically momentous vision of the dog's cosmic journey across America. Though the song is laced with sarcastic backing "yeah-yeahs," you know that this was a real important day for the band.

Childhood is regained and relisted in another instrumental-vocal pairing, "Opie Rides Again—Club Med Sucks." Benign memories of Andy Griffith's television spawn can't console a kid whose folks drag him off to a mall-like vacation in a prefab Mexican resort when what he really wants to do is just hang out on Newport Beach—so let's thrash. Songs such as these prove that Camper Van Beethoven stands for truth, justice, and psychedelic visions in the deserts of America. Such noble ideas, such a boss band to have around.

—Richard Gehr



Beat Rodeo
Staying Out Late With Beat
Rodeo
IRS

Beat Rodeo: great band. Staying Out Late With Beat Rodeo: fair album. Beat Rodeo is four dudes with artsy haircuts and cowboy boots who love to play rock 'n' roll. They do not say things like, "How's everybody doin' tonight?" or "Do you all want to rock 'n' roll?" Nor do they have pot-bellies and Cat Diesel hats. They play straightforward country-influenced American music, and they have a great time doing it. Unfortunately, their enthusiasm doesn't translate to vinyl on this album, which is why it isn't as cool as the band is.

From the radio-ready first cut "Just Friends" to the rockabilly guitar on "She's More" to the '60s reverb effects of "Without You," *Staying Out Late* offers variety and good licks galore. Buddy Holly comes to mind on many of the tracks; clean, unassuming arrangements are highlighted by virtuoso solo playing. Bill Schunk's smooth leads twist and turn throughout the album, adding texture and punch.

Enough of this pseudo-intellectual ranting. This is a good album. It's just a little disappointing coming from a band whose live performances make you want to put on your shit kickers and jump around like a fiend.

—Chris Carroll



Mission of Burma

The Horrible Truth About Burma
Ace of Hearts

Mission of Burma was loud. The kind of loud that gives you a toothache. *The Horrible Truth About Burma* recalls the feeling of standing next to the stage during the first chord. Guitarist Roger Miller and bassist Clint Conley would stack their amps in a wall behind Peter Prescott's drums. The surge reduced you to a dog in the road, frozen in the headlights of an oncoming truck.

It's no surprise that side two opens with a version of the Stooges' "1970." Conley says, "We gotta do this song 'cause we just gotta." And Prescott says, "Yup, no choice."

Burma disbanded in mid-'83, when Miller developed tinnitus, an ear condition aggravated by exposure to loud music. After the release that year of *vs.*, their only studio LP, public and critical interest in the band was at an all-time high. It's a tribute to the band's unfulfilled potential that this album's songs had not yet made their way into the studio. *The Horrible Truth* was recorded live in Detroit, Boston, Chicago, and New York during Burma's last, loud tour. Fortunately, it is not one of those records that has "Play Loud" printed on the sleeve.

Nothing so obvious. Burma always had the unnerving ability to tug at your ear with handfuls of influence and then lure you into territory foreign enough to negate them all. Witness the melodic Joy Division bassline of "Heart of Darkness,"

paired with taped sounds like elephant mating calls, before the tempo eases into overdrive. "Tremolo" features (before the fact) the same pulsing guitar as the Smiths' "How Soon Is Now." An open-heart-surgery throb seeps into the mix, and bass and drums frame the din.

Just when you're starting to think too much, Prescott says, "This next one's called 'Dumbells, Dumbells, Dumbells.'" The song's crippled frontal assault suggests a parody of hardcore. Even funnier are the audience's own remarks, slipped in between "He Is, She Is" and "Heart of Darkness": "Want some beer?"; "Ol, Ol, Ol, Ol . . ."; "Your mother's a skinhead?" Conley interjects, "This is real entertainment."

This year, Miller said to producer/label prez Rick Harte, "The horrible truth about Burma is really a pack of lies." This *Horrible Truth* documents the unexpected end of a band whose only constant was change. Under such circumstances, cynicism is always welcome.

—Sue Cummings



Pajama Slave Dancers

Cheap Is Real
Pajamarama

Behind the puke-green-and-aquamarine cover (with a shot of singer/guitarist Steve Westfield's sister-in-law hot and ready by a tropical beach backdrop) lurks something not all there. Meet the Pajama Slave Dancers, avatars of trompe l'oeil punk 'n'

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roll. PSD could be the biggest thing ever out of Westfield, Massachusetts. The question is, can they stand the honor?

The Slave Dancers—who prompt the audience to boo lustily at their concerts, whose frontman, Westfield, wears a large plastic alligator on his tacky-jacketed shoulder—are ravenous for pop esoterica and adolescent humor. The quintet's satisfyingly questionable taste runs to covering Ed Ames's 1967 pseudo-gospel hit "Who Will Answer?" as a nutso hardcore number; sticking a fairly straight

version of America's "Horse With No Name" after the made-for-college-radio power popper "Defreeze Walt Disney"; and following "Scoutmasters From Hell" with a hilarious Led Zeppelin take called "I Want to Make Love to You." Just what is going on here?

One of the Slave Dancers' songs is titled "Big Rock Stars," something they know they'll never be, so they drag the building down. With equal glee, they tackle the California sound ("Fast Cars, Girls in Bikinis"—the lyrics are the title, the music is one riff with variations), inner-city beat ("Farm Rap"), and country-western pride ("Homo Truck Driving Man").

Nervous energy pokes through most of the Slave Dancers' genre bending. For supposed super-amateurs, bassist Scott Blood, keyboard man Dax Rexford, guitarist Dave Montovani, drummer Jon Long (since replaced by Dirk Futon), and Westfield play better than they'd like us to think they do.

Cheap Is Real is a triumphantly silly record. Some tracks are so satirically on target that they rise to brilliance; a few on side two are just plain dumb. But it's still a great soundtrack for a pizza party in your head. True to its title, *Cheap Is Real* cost \$2,300 to put out (a friend of the band provided all the photography for \$80), so you know it's gotta be good. I'm not the only critic who laughed out loud at the thing, either. As runs the slogan on the label: "Stupid can be slick."

—Wes Eichenwald

Tales From the Bogusphere



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UNDERGROUND

Column by Andrea 'Enthal'

Great records are everywhere, but great bands are hard to find. Pere Ubu was a magic band most people never got to hear. Though it's hard to trace its influence because of all the commercial music that followed, Pere Ubu's quirky vocals and sour tonalities helped define the embryonic new wave. Lene Lovich and Missing Persons got to warble weirdly on commercial radio because years earlier Ubu and its contemporaries defiantly refused to sing right. This month we start with Ubu's leader, one behemoth David Thomas, who, with his new band, the Pedestrians, has a solo album.

David Thomas is a singing mime, a rotund and intense son of Honeymooner Ralph Kramden crossed with worry-free Alfred E. Newman whose vocal cackles match the giggling riffs of Lindsay Cooper's soprano and alto saxes. His is a simple world, childish but wise, in which twists and turns, terrorizing swamp flies, tantalizing fireflies, and everything that's civilized are delivered with mixed and mismatched glee. What starts as the fable of the grasshopper and the ant somehow goes awry between the sunglasses and the Hawaiian floral-print shirt the 'hopper wears around the pool as Thomas bubbles and warbles giddy-idiot style, like so many bobbing Mickey Mouse balloons. Who needs the fuddy-duddy moral anyway?

From the big blue sun of the "Whale Head King" through the kindergartenesque practicality of "New Broom," Thomas bends his fluid, off-kilter voice into an instrument, singing duets with oboe, bassoon, and tuba and spacing off into light-hearted little monologues about love and the weather and whether one can bail out the ocean with a bucket and a notion. Though it's easy to dismiss *More Places Forever*, Thomas's current solo album, as nursery blatherings, there are actually many subtle, witty references to discover and laugh at. *Places* enters the underground somewhere between jazz and rock with a slab of simple, pretension-free art lathered on top. Twin/Tone Records (445 Oliver Ave. S. Minneapolis, MN 55405) is Thomas's new label.

Thomas wasn't always the giddy idiot. Wide-eyed in worldly wonderment, laughing with a wickedly knowing leer, he stood onstage and called life for its sinister punchlines in his early years with **Pere Ubu**. Opponents tackled his gruff and rootsy blues growls, which combined a helping of Beefheart crossed

with the dulcet tones of a junior-high-school principal's morning P.A. announcements. Thomas was a stylist, not a crooner.

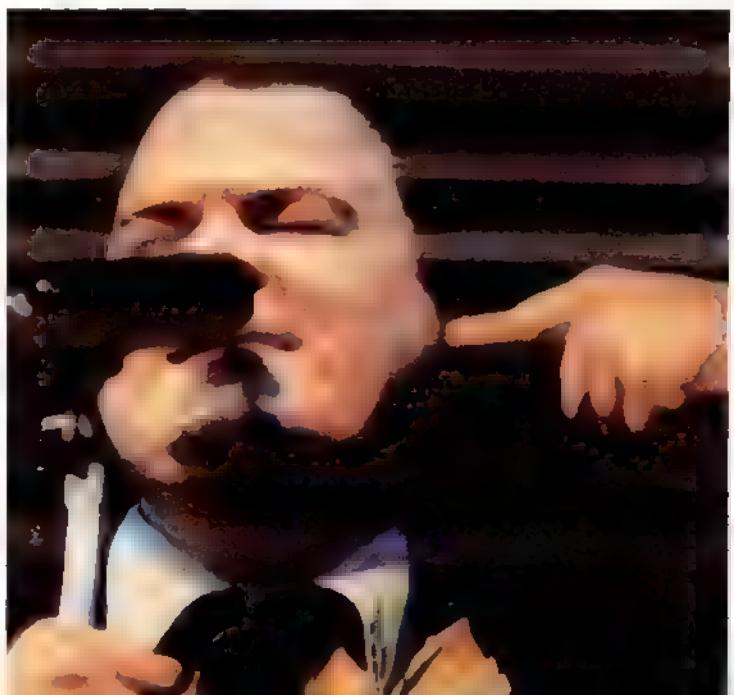
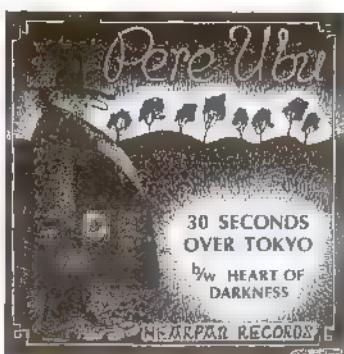
Named for Alfred Jarry's storybook king of Poland in the farcical French play *Ubu Roi*, Pere Ubu was one of the first bands in the American underground's new wave. However, Ubu was too early for punk and beyond psychedelia, though its roots were in the '60s guitar worship music inspired by Hendrix and Cream. Though its view of America as a working-class wasteland would later surface in punk's early tenets, the band was timeless. Listening to Pere Ubu today, it is impossible to determine when the semi-alienated stories of adolescent hopes and

frustrations were written. Ubu didn't conform to any clique's sound. One can usually date a band by the way the drums are mixed or how they use keyboards or even how fast or slow they play. For instance, "real" '60s psychedelic bands have very muddy percussion by today's post-disco standards. Current bands attempting to evoke the era seldom record their percussion to sound "bad." But nothing connects Ubu to any era, which is what makes their music as startling today as it was a decade ago.

The band was intended as a one-time-only assemblage of Cleveland, Ohio, scoundrels when it was born in a recording studio, 28 September 1975. Guitarist and *Cream* magazine writer Peter Laughner, from Thomas and Laughner's previous ensemble, *Rocket From the Tombs*, came first. Thomas brought the impromptu ensemble together to record the rocket tune "30 Seconds Over Tokyo," a triple-guitar dose of sheer surrealism nightmare.ominously opening over oriental sunrise shimmers and a doomsday-clock bass, "Seconds" is a gut-wrenching, abrasive/alluring journey through a fire field of ripped chords. "We flew off early in the haze of dawn, an elemental dragon lost in time," Thomas intones in a flat, deep, nearly keyless deadpan, "skimming waves of an underground sea, in some kind of dream-world fantasy." As dizzy note spirals over sinewy drones and an aircraft engine sputters to a stall, a single striptease-parlor drum beats under squealing frenzies and tortured strings. "God, this dream won't never, ever end," Thomas continues with the kind of tough, cold, motion-picture bravery that abounds in newsreels, his voice fused with the ghost of one doomed American fighter pilot. "And time seems like it will never begin / 30 seconds in a one-way ride / 30 seconds and no place to hide / 30 seconds over Tokyo . . . 30 seconds over Tokyo . . . 30 seconds



Above, below, and everywhere: David Thomas, former leader of Pere Ubu, is one whale of an entertainer. Opposite page: Pere Ubu spin-off Tripod Jimmie creates solid rock on the borderline where art goes primal, balancing on the talents of (left to right) new drummer Glenn Reynolds, Tom Herman, and Lennie Bove. But, like, who's Jimmie?



Mark L. Jones

... "In a sudden flurry of radio static and a squeal of feedback, the song comes to a breathlessly abrupt, dead stop. Merde! What a band.

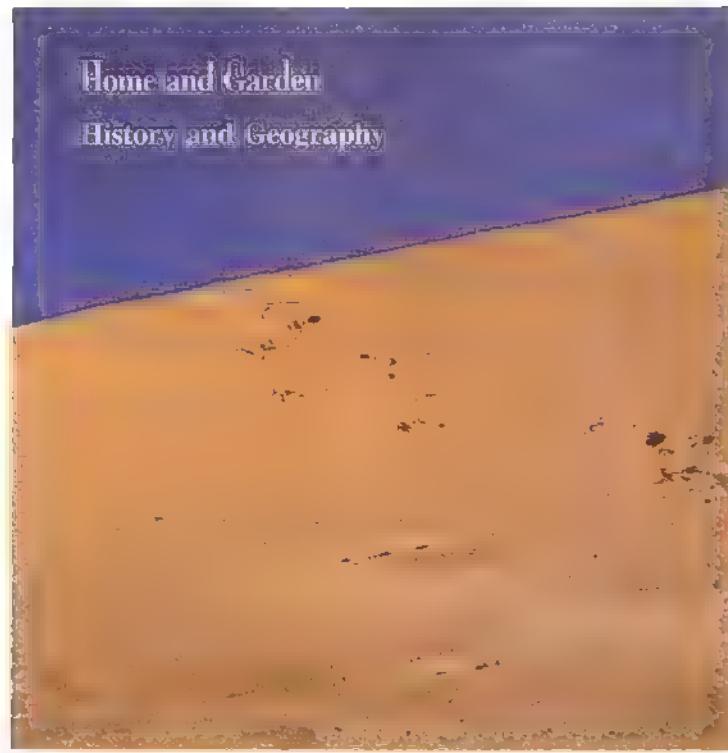
Influenced by experiments in musique concrete, synthesizer whiz Allen Ravenstine contributed recordings of an open-air market and weather reports, adding washes of flowing, noteless texture to Ubu's real-world sounds. Tom Herman kept the artier Thomas's and Ravenstine's work from floating off to never-never land, and Scott Krauss's light-handed percussion contributed more than just a 4/4 beat. Bassist Tony Maimone joined in July 1976. From the perky, pulsing hoedown "Cloud 149," with its boinks and sprung-rubber band notes plucking away like some headless-chicken strut, through the industrial-grade steam iron hisses of "The Modern Dance," Ubu was a magical match of conflicting approaches and contradictions that inevitably blew apart, but not before producing five studio albums and an assortment of singles, EPs, and flexidisc tracks. Some of the best and rarest of those are

rereleased on *Terminal Tower*, a 15-cut compilation of Ubu works. Opening with the full 4-minute, 44-second version of "Heart of Darkness," a mumble-voiced and soft-stated hypnopulse through the mutant lab of Doctor Moreau, Tower focuses mostly on the early band. A cover version of the Seeds' "Pushin' Too Hard," originally available from a CLE fanzine flexidisc, and eight single sides Thomas released between 1975 and 1978 on his own Hearthan label are among the previously out-of-print tracks now rereleased on Twin/Tone.

Four thousand miles and a decade separate Pere Ubu and Chorchazade, but they share an underlying modesty. Geisha-shy, with carefully plinked koto-esque guitar, "This Is His" blows out of the Orient like a glass wind chime, with delicate percussion and vocals of whispered wonderment. It's that singsong whisper that gives Chorchazade its identity. Chorchazade's vocals, otherworldly in their hush, range from a librarian's convention of muffled *shhh*'s to laryngitis-afflicted barks. They natter in semi-intelligible blusters about "a bag of crisps" and Christ over a bargain-basement angel choir on "His," with sweetly off-key and off-kilter signs marking "Aah, You Are As Light As A Feather." "Where There's Brera" is an equally singsong melody of serrated-edged guitar, stopping and starting like a slip-and-slide hoedown, constantly building on its racing scratches. The earliest Scritti Politti records burbled with the mindless joy and minimalist majesty of Chorchazade's three-track EP, *Crackle & Corkette*. Revolver (Old Malt House, Little Ann St., Bristol 2, England) released this record, which enters the United States through the U.K. export firm Cartel.



Beyond the Flock of Hairdressers there's a man's world called "Monkeytown," where a string machine, Roland 808, Vox Continental organ, Univox rhythm machine, EML synthesizer, RMI electric piano, MXR delay unit, and mellotron make music, not nouveau-robot disco, under the very human hands of **Home and Garden**. Founded by former Ubus Scott Krauss and Tony Maimone, Home and Garden combines sweeping oscillated white-noise breezes, whooshes, wiggles, and fireworks whistles with surreal lyrics about China and the sea. "Monkeytown" is full of



monkeyshines, with its goofily boinked and clanked spring track, shivering keyboard flows, and high-pitched avant bleeps and blurbles. It's the ability to make all the technology sound human rather than all the humans sound technological that makes *History and Geography*, Home and Garden's second album, stand out from the synthmonger pack. Chockful of guitar, bass, and Krauss's multifaceted rhythms, *History* evokes the delicate chord pattern and mystical shimmer of the Orient on "Marco Polo: The City of Kin Sai," while vocalist J. Morrison, in his plain, recitational boy-next-door delivery, tells about practicing "the arts of cat comfort" and raising a castle "outside the walls of Holy Toledo." "Marco Polo: The Voyage Home" is a fast-tromping dance track with elevator motors and crowd shouts, while "The Bells of Ever and Never" is all spooky-gothic church organ pomp. From the jazzy post-Beatnik rap of "Big Winter," with its hand-plucked upright acoustic bass and washes of hissing white-noise wind, through "King Penguin," a Farfisa-inspired circus parade of tacky electric organ chords, *History and Geography* picks up where Ubu left off in "Chinese Radiation," continuing a style of synthesizer use and a noise-in-music approach no one else seems to have tried. After Hours Records, 300 Prospect Ave., in Home and Garden's hometown of Cleveland, OH 44115, can let you hear what synths that aren't electro funk or soft fusion sound like.

With all of Ubu's creative use of sound and synth, one would think that the man who pioneered their style would be the most obvious member of some post-Ubu group. But the shy and serious Allen Ravenstine is the only Ubu who

Persian. "Uncle Jim" is a southern-fried slanderfest set to the kind of jazz one might hear in the lobby of a Holiday Inn. I'd be hard-pressed to cite which passages contained the simulated religious suicide, magic clove umbrella, kretek smoke bomb, or gypsy bottle rockers, but I don't doubt they're there. For those who have roommates they'd like to punish or who just like to listen to music on the serrated edge of sound, the Sun City Girls' album is available through Placebo Records, P.O. Box 23316, Phoenix, AZ 85063.

Tripod Jimmie is one son-of-an-Ubu. A trio formed by Ubu renegade Tom Herman, its tunes aren't as much songs as infectious rave-downs in solid rock that repeat on their rhythmic and enticing selves. There's no Jimmie in the band. Instead, there's Lennie Bove, a vocalist of flowing yodel yelps and wiggle warbles inspired by Thomas's explorations of tonality. On *Long Walk Off a Short Pier*, Jimmie's debut album, there's also drummer Roger Prehoda. With lots of chunky, sparse chords and a sawing bass line two octaves too low for surf, Jimmie pulses and beats to the kind of gutsy abrasiveness found in early Gang of Four. Police sirens and a cuckoo clock continue Ubu's concrete

hasn't resurfaced yet. He did, however, make a guest appearance on *Into the Vision*, an album of '70s-style progressive rock by Todd Clark that also includes Cleveland scenester Chetah Chrome. TMI Records, P.O. Box 19153, Pittsburgh, PA 15273, released that album.

Cross the noisy anarchy of the Butthole Surfers with a guitar solo by Sonic Youth and double-cross that coupling with the jazz-meets-poetry abrasions of Saccharine Trust and you'll have some idea of the sound produced by the **Sun City Girls** on their album of the same name. An excursion into almost pure noise with song titles that include "Metaphors in a Mixmaster," "Your Bible Set Off My Smoke Alarm," and "The Burning Nerve Ending Magic Trick," *Sun City Girls* is some of the hardest-to-swallow rock this side of Gibraltar. Interspersed with the rough-and-grumble are an assortment of gentle fold melodies laced with pretty dulcimer and a tromp through a mystical Moslem minaret delivered in pseudo-



Courtesy Newbury

tradition. Jimmie makes music somewhere on the borderline where art goes primal. A samba-hissing rhythm box chugs like a sleepy maraca as Jimmie takes vocal swoops and dives through "Mirror on the Wall" before crashing into "Empty Seed," with its backwards masking chorus wailing like a rough-hewn version of the 2001 obelisk. "Nu Spartans" returns to mother rock with a collection of elephant calls to match the elephantine, beating guitar work that greets your feet without skipping past your mind. From Do Speak, 4188 Greenwood #15, Oakland, CA 94602.

As always, I am interested in comments about the underground, what you like and dislike, who's great that I haven't yet listened to, what fanzines are worth reading, and what is going on. I will try to answer those letters that enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Andrea Enthal, SPIN, 1965 Broadway, NY, NY 10023.



Singles

When stupid music happens to smart people: the sounds of nonsense.

Column by John Leland

innocents, idiots, vagrants, fools, even filthy-rich rock stars: all are capable on rare occasion of mustering the limited intelligence and vision required to make a winning single. It's nice to be able to spin coherent ideas, but in their absence any foolishness that someone's willing to stand behind for four minutes will do. Therefore, this month a lot of stupid records: a rap record that tears down its own groove, a pop rocker crediting baseball with the potential for inciting mass youth uprisings, inspired collaborations between likely and unlikely partners, and promising pairings that smolder without any spark. All this, plus the standard ranting.

Red Hot Chili Peppers: "Jungle Man," "Nevermind," and "Stranded" b/w "Hollywood (Africa)" (EMI)

Last time out, the Chilis were an exceptionally inspired bad band, singing bad songs with stupid lyrics and attitude to spare. They made you feel like you just stepped in dog-shit, but they also made you feel okay about it. This latest disc finds them working with George Clinton and moving closer to the nut. Not necessarily a good thing. Take away the Chilis' glaring flaws and they're just another band. Much of this record sounds like a bunch of white guys playing funk. They do it with some élan, and Fred Wesley and the Horny Horns help, but they sacrifice some of their identity for the sake of competence. They get it together on "Hollywood (Africa)," a schizophrenic song about roots (Clinton's and the Chilis') that grabs the essence of this collaboration by the nuts with a groove that transcends.

Roxanne Shante: "Bite This" (Pop Art)

"Time to get it straight / Time to make it clear / The real Roxanne is standing right here." So claims the deliciously fly Ms. Shante, and you can't blame her for her vehemence. She's been the target of more cheap shots than anyone since Madonna, and she doesn't even get Sean Penn in the bargain. It's an uncontested fact that she made the first Roxanne response record, but originality isn't exactly her strong suit—she lifted her "Roxanne's Revenge" beat from U.T.F.O. So her claim that everybody else bites her lines comes off as just sassy attitude. Which is her strong suit. Crackly-wacky

voice and all, she tells Run-D.M.C., LL Cool J, Kurtis Blow, and the Bad Boys what they can do. Or rather, she lets her scratcher tell 'em, asking, "What should they do, Marley Marl?" to which he scratches in reply, "Bite this." The cuts are in the pocket and the attitude is flying. Fellas, the ball is in your court.

David Bowie and Mick Jagger: "Dancing in the Streets" (EMI)

Each of these guys has probably spent the better part of his career trying to carve an individual identity with classic mid-'60s pop soul at its heart. But when it comes to doing the stuff straight, our heroes are caught on their heels, partly because they're so far removed from dancing in the streets, and partly because they're so far removed from everything else—including each other. There's no chemistry here. Even the band is sluggish. Jagger has the sense to camp it up, so when he bashes the song's head against the turnbuckle he at least sounds like he's having fun. Bowie tries to inflict the Thin White Duke on this and comes off like a frilly lounge singer. They should've done "Let's Spend the Night Together"; they could've shamelessly stroked each other's egos while we watched.

Husker Du: "Makes No Sense at All" b/w "Love Is All Around" (SST)

The A side of this record is just more of the Husker dudes' typical brilliant super-whammo-overdrive guitar/bass/drum



clang within a phenomenal pop song. Sure it's great, but if you've been listening you already know these guys are god-head and don't need a scrawny 7-inch single to prove their genius. The flip, however, is critical—it's an achingly sincere reading of the theme from the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*. They do it straight, with lots of sentimental yearning and no camp, but they Husker it up: Bob Mould's crunching guitar strings and Grant Hart's drums threaten to break it in two. Over the swirling, melodic din, the vocals—which try like hell to stay on key—create a pathos of coarse beauty. They turn this harmless television theme song into a wailing vision of utopia.

Doug E. Fresh and the Get Fresh Crew: "The Show" b/w "La-Di-Da-Di" (Reality)

What you've got here is a failure of discipline. These guys pull obnoxious shit that their parents should have whupped out of them years ago. Like, Doug E. Fresh spits and sprays and blows Bronx cheers

and calls himself the Original Human Beat Box. And Slick Rick talks like a drunk whose nose doesn't work and lays into a pathetic sendup of "Michelle." But the folks never drew the line, and the kids ran wild. Good thing, too, because this record is a good time. In the rap battle to make the stupidest record, Doug E. Fresh is out front. He even raps about needing a shoehorn because his shoes hurt his feet. And Slick Rick is the least fly MC this side of the Concept. Dougie's beatbox imitations are impressive if you go for that sort of thing, but the best thing about this record is the way nothing ever comes together. Obnoxious, but it's the shit.

The Cure: "In Between Days" b/w "The Exploding Boy" and "A Few Hours After This" (Elektra)

Robert Smith's band of gloom merchants will never lead the league in melodicism, and on any given outing they're likely to stumble over their sophomore Camus obsessions or get stuck in turgid angst. However, on "In Between Days" they cool out and turn in a melody that even survives the opening parry: "Yesterday I felt so old / I felt that I could die." It has the bittersweet feel of a New Order record, with a hyperstrummed acoustic guitar for depth. The boys even offer a genuine glimmer of hope, and the tune fairly breezes by on its own momentum. However, on the two-track flip side the Cure returns to its plodding tunelessness.

Kate Bush: "Running Up That Hill" (EMI)

Like everything Kate Bush does, this mystical record is more than the sum of its parts. Bush's forte is constructing dense moods out of elusive scraps of sonic information: a guitar line swallowed by its own processing, an insistent tom-tom rhythm, and lyrics buried in echo that



Stevie Nicks

hint at more than they disclose. The record works by intimation. Which is fine, because there are plenty of signifiers in the minimal mix. However, there isn't much besides the drum beat to get next to. "Running Up That Hill" is about swapping identities, with the exchange of pains and abilities involved. There's a lot of amatory epithets in the air, but if this is a love song, it's a pretty twisted one. Bush keeps the exchange partially hidden by shadow and uses her voice seductively to promise a revelation she never delivers. But she keeps you believing that this time she'll give up the goods.

Dolby's Cube: "May the Cube Be With You" b/w "Googoplexus/Cube Creature Caviar" (Parlophone import)

One record with George Clinton and the guy's cool, right? Well, maybe so. But Thomas Dolby's one-off Cube, another collaboration with Clinton, has none of the bottomless funk or wit of *Some of My Best Jokes Are Friends*. Fact is, this is a pretty perfunctory groove thing, without teeth or—more important—concept. Can't figure out why Dolby wanted to make the record. It's about the ultimate pleasure drug, but it's too static to be intoxicating: nothing jumps out of the grooves, and Dolby's voice clings to an unfunkable melody. And on top of it all, he clogs things up with a twinkly piano solo. The placebo syndrome in action.

Sonic Youth: "Death Valley '69" (Homestead)

Thunderclap crunch rock takes a beat-up Plymouth with four retreads and no brakes into the heart of the American Nightmare. Death kitten Lydia Lunch moans and shrieks while the Sonics massage their

Opposite, top: *The Red Hot Chili Peppers*, who were produced by George Clinton; bottom: *Husker Du* is from Minneapolis, 532 miles west of Detroit (home of George Clinton); below: *Sonic Youth*, which at press time had never been produced by George Clinton; right: Nick Lowe with (off-camera) the engagingly vulgar George Clinton.

guitars with drumsticks and screwdrivers. This is an art band playing straight up—kicking the shit out of a hairy, Stooges-type riff with no thought to subtleties. The lyrics spiral in fragments off the homicidal side of either Flannery O'Connor or benzedrine, with a dose of the Manson family thrown in for good measure. But for Sonic Youth heads, the real action is on the B side. It's got four songs: one from each of their first three records plus the previously unreleased "Satan Is Boring," a neat splattering of guitar sounds tucked behind a dissipated vocal.

The Men They Couldn't Hang: "Ironmasters" b/w "Donald, Where's Your Troosers" and "Rawhide" (Imp/Demon import)

I'm not sure how much I'll play this in the coming months, but if I do cue it up, it'll be a tribute to the sense of humor that rules on the second side. And because I'm a sucker for bad TV theme songs.

You can't accuse these lads of mincing words. "Ironmasters" is a bilious indictment of the union-busting, exploitative British industrial system. It's a rousing Irish folk anthem, with military snare battering, guitars that sound like mandolins, horns, and lyrics that hold no ambiguities: "Oh the ironmasters / They always get their way." Risky shit—ask the Alarm



Louie Levine

or Big Country—but the Unhangables pull it off (if they do) by driving the thing harder than they should.

The Nightmares: "Baseball Altamont" b/w "Hold On and Pray" (Coyote)

So look, not everybody's a genius. The singles pantheon is built on reasonably coherent but stupid ideas that service the synapses of the great unwashed. "Baseball Altamont" is a straight rocker about the day all hell breaks loose at Shea Stadium: 50,000 kids taking law into their own hands. The Nightmares don't say, but it must be some tight pennant race to get all those folks out to see the Mets. Maybe it's bat day. Anyway, Keith Hernandez, ordinarily a pretty steady guy, gets frustrated and burns a cigarette from Dr. K and the fans go nuts. Dumb but effective, largely for the low-tech guitar sound and the useless passion at the end. The flip side is an icky countrified ballad—the perils of wearing your flannel shirt on your sleeve.

SIDESWIPES

Huey "Baby" Harris's "You've Got to Be a Winner" (Profile) has all the idiotic pick-me-up power of the theme from *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* plus a "Basketball Jones" falsetto and a beat . . . **Playgroup**'s "Euphoria" (Virgin import) runs on sequencers rather than blood and is definitely not euphoric. Nor is it compellingly ironic . . . **Nick Lowe**'s "I Knew the Bride (When She Used to Rock 'n' Roll)" (F-Beat import) is gentler than his best reading of the song, but it's still a ready-made standard. Lounge acts, take note . . . Speaking of lounge acts, **Marc Almond** vamps for the middle rollers on "Stories of Johnny" (Virgin import) . . . "Cantare, Cantaras (I Will Sing, You Will Sing)" by **Hermanos** (Columbia) is the Latin equivalent of "We Are the World"—in both its good intentions and its smarmy melody. Where's the *cojones*? . . . **Mantronix**'s "Needle to the Groove" (Sleeping Bag) has a great middle that's even hotter than "Fresh Is the Word," but it's sandwiched between some lame shit with a vocoder. That machine should be outlawed . . . "Hambo: First Rap Part II" (Tommy Boy) is a foolish, Stallone-ized rap that's rivaled only by the "Rappin' Duke"—and perhaps by the movie . . . **10,000 Maniacs** mix simple southern tunes with soca and fake Fripstertronics on the hit-and-miss *Can't Ignore That Train* EP (Elektra). Good band, but they need a sharper edge . . . **Simply Red** tries to pull off some blue-eyed soul on "Money's Too Tight (to Mention)" (Elektra) and sounds about as greasy as Boz Scaggs . . . the **Hollis Crew** does its best with a pretty useless hook on "It's the Beat" (Def Jam) . . . **The Real Roxanne** gives Shante's claim an extra dollop of credibility with her lifeless "Romeo" (Select) . . . **Dreams So Real** from Athens, Georgia, plays catchy if familiar folk pop on "Everywhere Girl" b/w "Whirl" (Coyote). Peter Buck of R.E.M. produced . . . The perhaps ironically named **Adventures** serve up lifeless C.H.R. formulas on the mushy "Send My Heart" (Chrysalis). Support this band and you'll have no one but yourself to blame . . . and finally, the **Pet Shop Boys** round up a generally low-I.Q. lunar circuit with the month's most odious couplet: "I've got the brains, you've got the looks / Let's make lots of money," from "Opportunity (Let's Make Lots of Money)" (Parlophone). Material girls, are you listening? Is anyone?



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Cracker Management Photo by John Balcom





MARKS THE SPOT

X is angling for a broader audience; *Ain't Love Grand* just might have the hooks to catch it.

Article by Bart Bull



Marc Lelochka

WELCOME TO THE EDGEWATER INN

"The Edgewater Inn is the only hotel property in the West built entirely over the water where guests can actually 'Fish From Their Window' (but please don't clean the catch in your room!).

"A variety of Big Name Entertainers have been at the Edgewater—from the Dave Clark Five to Pearl Bailey, Shelly Berman to Johnny Carson, Georgie Jessel to George Carlin, Mel Torme, Billy Daniels, and Tony Martin."

This list conveniently skips the subject of Big Name Entertainers Led Zeppelin, and the group's fabled Edgewater urge to "Fish From Their Window" and then take the catch and cram it up the spread-eagled snatch of a flattered fan—but let's agree to forget that. *Forget it.* Who cares about Big Name Entertainers such as Led Zeppelin and their stupid sex habits and the fact that they think so little of their fans and their fans think so little of themselves. What does that have to do with this?

Exene comes into the motel room bitching to anybody who cares to listen about how much it costs to fish. Down in the gift shop a sign details the bad news concerning tackle rental, security deposits, and tangled lines; the deposit is 35 bucks.

Exene: "That'd mean we spent \$100 to go fishing. No way!"

Billy Zoom: "I would. Except I'm afraid I might catch one—then you'd have to touch a fish."

Exene (speculatively, theoretically): "Just cut the line."

The guy whose room they're in, the guy interviewing them (me, that is), doesn't like X's new record, *Ain't Love Grand*. He's not the only one. A lot of old-line X partisans—people who believe that X has been the best American band of its time, the one with the most integrity, the smartest, the most daring, the least compromised—are having plenty of trouble swallowing this new album hook, line, and sinker.

Exene: "I have a question for you: If Ray Manzarek would've produced it, what do you think you would've thought of it then?"

X (Don Bonebrake, John Doe, Exene Cervenka, and Billy Zoom) stands at the crossroads of punk nonconformity and AOR success.

Good question, and one designed to scope out the answerer's moldy-fog factor, to find out if the guy's just another die-hard punk-rock nostalgic, to find out if he's determined to hang on to the good old days no matter how many calendar pages float past his face. Because *Ain't Love Grand* sure sounds a whole hell of a lot different than each of the four albums that came before it.

Exene: "We know it does."

—and each of those was produced by ex-Door-until-the-day-he-dies Ray Manzarek. And none of those records sold worth a damn, not by the standards of a big, contemporary, mainstream record company is inclined to apply.

And how many is that?

Exene: "Well, I'll tell you what—first of all, I don't think that's anybody's business but ours."

John Doe: "I think we've sold more of *More Fun in the New World* than *Under the Big Black Sun* and *Los Angeles*. They're all about, you know, a hundred-and-some thousand, maybe a hundred and fifty. This one's somewhere around seventy, eighty."

Exene: "I really don't know."

Still, one and all, they were some pretty great records. Better than that, even. *Bang! Bang!* the music went *Bang!*, the songs tasted sour of poverty and spit, and it all rang a good deal truer than just a bunch of white kids dabbling briefly ("We're desperate / Get used to it") in the downbeat *vie bohème*. The writing fell out in jarring fragments ("In this house that I call home / Nobody knows the party rules." "We'll crawl through your backyard / And whack your yappin' dog." "The world's a mess / It's in my kiss.") that made you all the more nervous because they made so much shattered sense. Bonebrake's drumming was dead-center direct, no matter whether that center was hi-octane louder/faster thrash or something like punk that knew enough to acknowledge its roots. John Doe howled and Exene squawked—with the pride, integrity, and guts to keep thanking her vocal coach on the back of the albums—and Billy Zoom always zipped it all together with generic-brand chuckberry riffs played from a comic-book superhero's stance, feet never less than a yard apart. Yet none of the records got AOR airplay or sold the way a big mainstream record company likes to see its records sell.

Which takes us—all of us—back to *Ain't Love Grand*.

Billy Zoom: "I think it's the best songs we've ever done, and the best-produced record, and the best-engineered, and the best-sounding record we've made. It's the first one I'm really happy with. The others were always kind of hit-and-miss."

Argue that last part if you can. "Hit-and-miss"—that's exactly what they were. They sounded like a V-8 firing on only seven cylinders, but somebody cranked it up to at least 85 mph all the same, because who could afford to stop and tune it up? There are worse ways to sound. You could sound like all eight cylinders have just been scoped and dyno-tuned, timed and gapped to factory-specified perfection. That's the way all rock records sounded back in the days when X got going.



Laure Levine

back when the whole point of the very existence of a band like X was to rain piss all over the concept that music was something manufactured by record companies according to the strict specs of format radio with the only-too-willing cooperation of bands wearing their finest shit-eating smiles. Hell, Billy Zoom's still got a few unused one-liners saved up from back then—"Peter Frampton's the only guy in the world who can sing 'I'm Alive' and not have any credibility"—but somehow they don't have the same punch anymore, probably because Peter Frampton's Big Name Entertainer status kind of evaporated in the harsh glare of the late '70s during the advent of punk and of bands like X. Which is probably why a smartass remark such as that hangs in the air like a musty fart preserved in a jar since 1977.

John Doe: "Hopefully, within the songs there's more to offer than a Pavlov's response of, like, 'Wow, let's roll another doobie.' "

Billy Zoom (sprawled on the motel bed, retracing a schematic drawing of an amplifier's circuitry): "You know what I hate? I hate it when somebody writes an article about us and they use the word *punk*. There's no such thing, anyway."

Punk. In what other popular-music subdivision could someone sing so terribly, so lousily, so godawfully as Exene does on *Ain't Love Grand*'s "Love Shack" and still expect people to listen? And yet, I guess maybe you have to sympathize with the poor guy's plight. He only wants to stand on a stage above ten or twenty thousand paying customers and strike poses for them while effortlessly tossing off hot licks. Jeez, who can blame him—him and ten million other guys. Meanwhile, he has to suffer the indignity of people writing articles about him that keep mentioning punk, just because when X first got rolling this weird clotting phenomenon was happening, this odd, unpredictable, out-of-control thing with all sorts of different people doing all sorts of different things; just because all this freneticism was making enough of a diversionary uproar for all sorts of oddness to slip through.

Exene: "I'll tell you something. Elvis Costello and

Talking Heads and X all started out at about the same time as so-called punk bands, but you don't read a review of the Talking Heads that says it's a punk band. You have to realize that *punk* was just a convenient term at that time to describe things that weren't mainstream."

All sorts of things slipped through. And while it's undoubtedly a genuine problem careerwise that Johnny ("We mean it, maaaan!") Rotten's never been able to convince the world he's really John Lydon, I'm not convinced that it's anybody's problem but his. His and his record company's.

X's record company found a new producer for them, Michael Wagener, who's worked with bands whose names I can't remember, the kind of names that look real mean when logoed across the top of an album cover with a scene from a He-Man cartoon.

Exene: "I don't think it's a 'rock-critic' record."

Wagener's given them a bigger sound, a crunchier sound, a real "rock" sound. He's given them a laughably homogenized sound that succeeds—X now sounds like everything else on AOR radio.

John Doe: "Sonically, it's designed to fit into radio airplay. We're waving a typical . . . somewhat typical-sounding carpet under radio listeners' noses. Then they've got the opportunity to see that there's more going on than just, you know, 'I can't drive 55.' Not to say that that's the worst."

Billy Zoom (looking up): "I don't know—only being able to drive 55's pretty bad."

John Doe: "Anyway, hopefully within the songs there's more to offer than a Pavlov's response of like, 'Wow, let's roll another doobie.' "

Exene and John have, over the years, written the fiercest songs about sex, marriage, infidelity, and heartache since Hank Williams and Miss Audrey were settin' the woods on fire. And for at least the last year, the Hollywood Hipster Hotline's been all abuzz about the two of them taking their act to Splitsville. D-I-V-O-R-C-E—nothing like a little aggravated marital discord to either add grit to your mill or let the wind right out of your sails. X's track record alone ought to suggest that *Ain't Love Grand* would be among the greatest Breakin' Up Is Hard to Do-ers ever, Big Name Entertainer-style production job or not. There's no reason at all to expect they'd lose that edge.

John Doe: "Tell you what you do. You sorta lace your

boots up another notch tighter, you pull your belt another notch tighter, you get a little glint in your eye, and you go 'I'm a fearless motherfucker, so take this!'"

Except that the songs on *Ain't Love Grand* aren't fearless at all. Simpler, more plainspoken, definitely—and there's nothing wrong with that . . . if it works. But it doesn't. The best songs here would have been second-raters on any of their other records—

Billy Zoom: "You really shouldn't think about records so much when you listen to them. You should either like them or not like them."

—and that goes no matter who produced what.

John Doe: "We made an effort to simplify the songs so that they aren't so . . . scattershot."

Billy Zoom: "Fewer chord changes and stuff."

John Doe: "Yeah. And lyrically, the songs on *More Fun in the New World* were just all over the place. Whereas now, 'My Soul Cries Your Name' is more direct, and even though it sounds more 'rock'-oriented, it's actually more like a country-western song. The songs are simple and direct; they're about two people. It goes across the album like that. Whereas before, we'd put everything into the X records, now we'll . . . now we'll leave out—on this record we left out some songs we'd written so that it came across as a more singular thing. So in that way it was a conscious effort—it's not like a conscious effort to commercialize the sound. Even though we wanted to prove to ourselves that, 'Hey, if everybody else can get songs on the radio, so can we.'

"Quite honestly, you get sick of doing the same shit all the time. You get sick of doing similar-sounding records, of playing the same places when you go on tour, and of reaching the same people. Sooner or later that gets to the point of diminishing returns. Like D.O.A. or Black Flag—everybody says they've sold out anyway, you know, even if they're doing the same thing and they're fuckin' working six days a week when they're on the road, in a van. You know, just because they have some records out, people say they sold out."

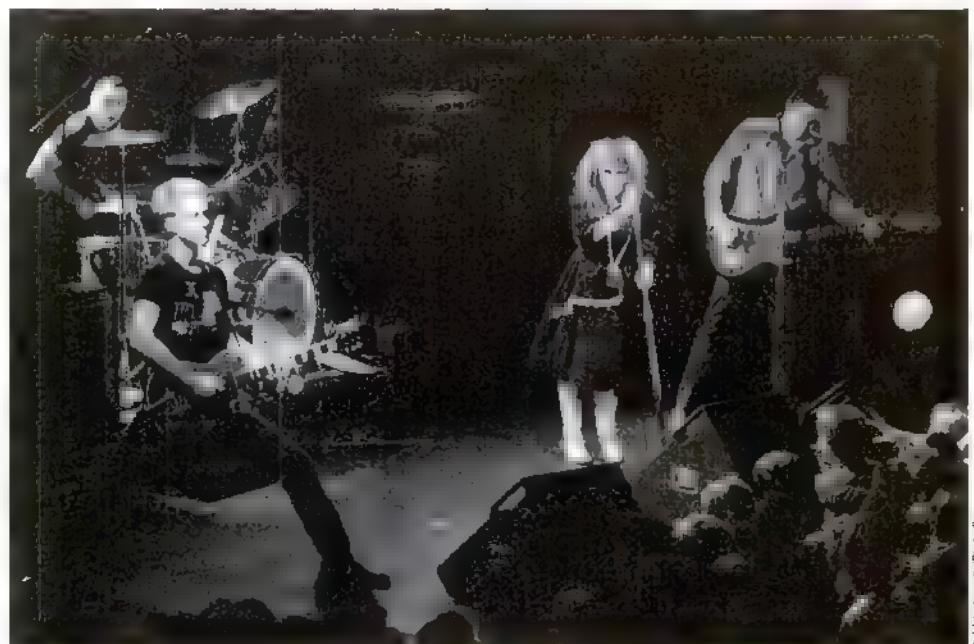
Exene: "You have to realize too that this is not utopia we live in. This is a world where there's this band that's been together for eight years and has made these albums that everybody thinks are so great and no one knows it. We're really famous—millions of people know who we are but millions of people haven't heard us. That has gotta be really, really frustrating for an artist."

It's kind of pleasing to think that even real famous folk such as the members of X can be too cheap to fish out of their Edgewater window. You can't blame them for wanting to make it big in a big way with big production, the kind that lets a band that used to be punk—that used to be *proud* to be punk—get played on the radio.

What you can blame them for is making a bad record, a big, hollow record. But is that selling out?

Billy Zoom: "Selling out is when you get a bunch of money. If you didn't get a bunch of money, you didn't sell out."

Do these people look like sell-outs? Top: Exene and John admire the group's gnarly new logo. Bottom: X makes the music go Bang!



Laura Levine

Debbie Leowitt/Pix Int'l

MUSIC

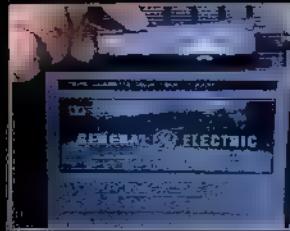
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adventurers came upon
a civilization that had...
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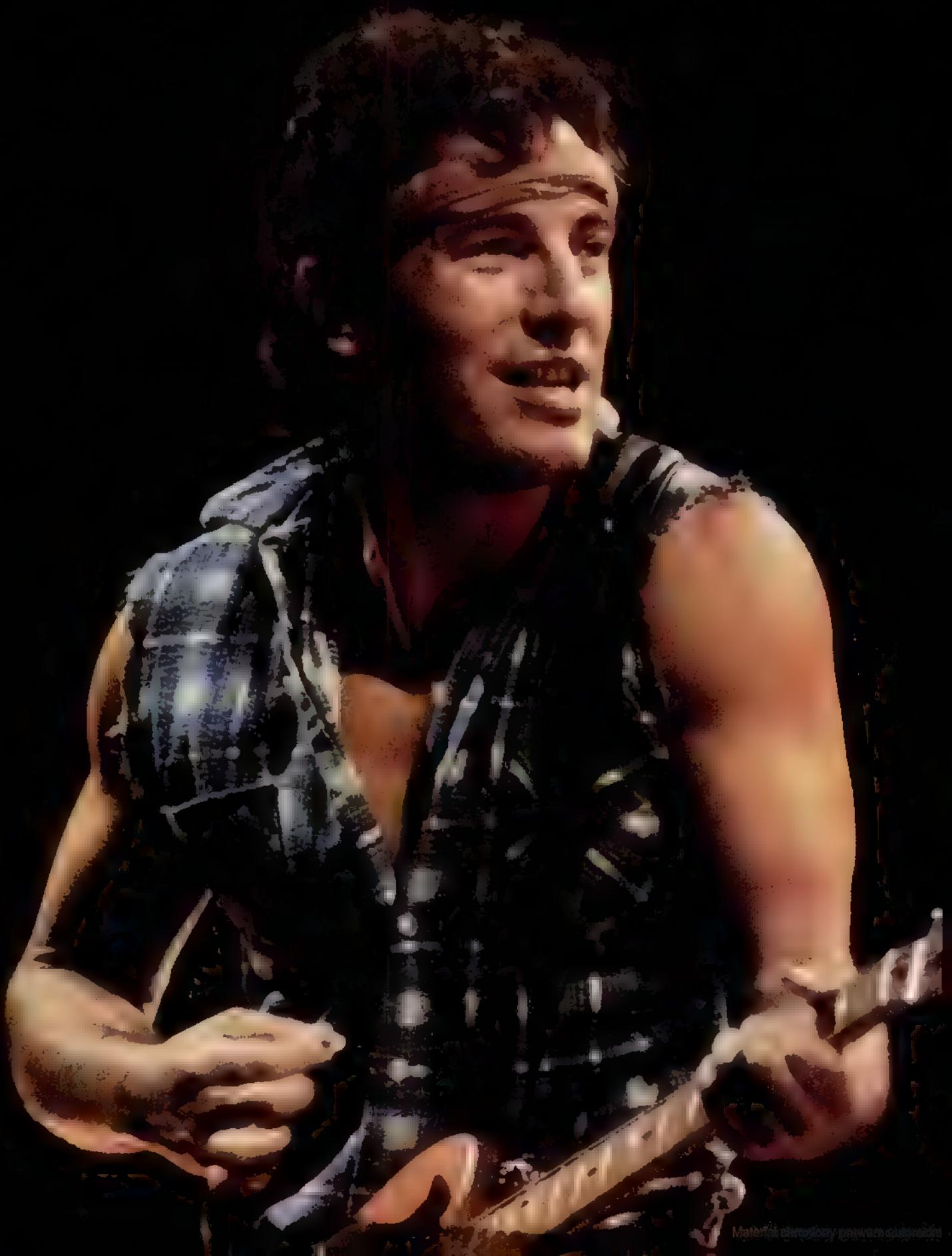
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THE MEANING OF BRUCE

Everyone knows who the boss is,
but who is the Boss?
Seven writers offer seven answers.

Article by Amiri Baraka, Scott Cohen,
Tama Janowitz, Eric King, Richard Meltzer,
Glenn O'Brien, and Rich Stim

It sure is great to be livin' in the U.S.A., because this is a country where a common man like Boss Springsteen can get on stage wearing a work shirt and jeans, strap on a guitar, and sing about other common men. And that's it! No makeup (except in the videos), no bullshit hairdo, nothing between him and his fans but an electric guitar . . . well, except for a mega platter-pusher called CBS Records, a vast web of monster-kilowatt radio programmers, an inbred army of national record promoters, various slimy back-patters and back-stabbers, some prominent American film directors, and a few unidentifiable hand-holding general music-biz types. But that stuff doesn't matter, because Bruce is great. He's a poet and he don't know it. So cool, he can shrinkwrap Old Glory and not get his pants pulled down for it. So hip that both presidential candidates cop to him. And best of all, he just got married to the girl next door (assuming you live next to Jenilee Harrison).

Yeah, it's a great country, and it's a great year—not just for Bruce but for the whole Blue Collar Brigade. Huey is only one platinum yard behind the Boss (*B-USA* is at 7 mill; *Sports* is at 6). George Thorogood has broken the 40. Tom Petty's newest has been on

Hey, it was the greatest show I've ever seen. It was like rock 'n' roll and a gospel meeting and a party and the World Series rolled into one.

the charts 20-plus weeks. Bob Seger was revived by *Risky Business*. And John Cougar (né Mellencamp) can expect heavy chart action and MTV rotation for *Scarecrow*. The other two blue-collar Johns—Fogerty and Cafferty—have had a dynamite year. Even our Canadian brothers Bryan and Corey hit their stride. No doubt about it, this army of the common people is sweeping through radio formats like a rock 'n' roll A-Team.

But like all great trends, the rock populist movement is one part destiny and two parts strategy. The strategy comes from a coalition of silent conspirators, heads of U.S.A.-based conglomerates who own and control our sources of entertainment and consumer products. Unlike other multinational conspiracies, this group is seeking more than product manipulation. They are attempting to influence a generation on the verge of massive baby-making. They are gearing for the turn of the century, when the American Dream is going to face some serious global problems. In order to guarantee that apple pie is not replaced with apple croissants, we need to instill a value system that will give some Gary Cooper-type American backbone to the Class of 2010.

And if you want to reach the baby-makers you have to go to pop music, because ever since Elvis, the premise and promise of rock music (and the reason why it's packed with short guys and ugly faces) is that *The Guy With the Guitar Gets the Girl!*

So, let's face it, if you've got a heavy investment in the red, white, and blue, you're going to want Miller-time bambinos. That's why Bruce pulled the All-American blonde onstage in his "Dancin' in the Dark" video, and that's why a media bomb was dropped over his wedding. Somebody out there is mixing Elvis Presley and the Constitution in a last-ditch attempt to create a race capable of manning the danger-bound U.S.A. Mothership.

We can't do much to control this kind of long-term fascist planning, but we can certainly rejoice in the baby-making. Let's support all Americans in love. Best to Bruce. If his "Glory Days" video is an accurate prophecy, maybe we can expect some real born-in-the-U.S.A. action: baby bosses!

—Rich Stim

Some of my best friends are people I used to dislike. And it is frequently those qualities that made them repellent in the first place that later make them seem so attractive. Today, when someone says of a friend: "How can you stand it?" I just smile and say "Give 'em a little time."

I think I've learned my lesson. Now I like people like that right off. It's not so much a matter of suspending judgment as collating it. And I've learned not to go by anybody else's opinion of anything. In fact, if they hate it, I'm intrigued.

I didn't see the movie *Bonnie and Clyde* for three years because everybody liked it. Later I would see it ten times.

It was like that with Bruce Springsteen. We're still not best friends, but now I'm a real fan, a fan who used to sort of roll his eyes and say, "Oh yeah, he's the guy with all the bells in his songs, right?"

Just the fact that *Rolling Stone* writer Jon Landau said something like "I have seen the future of rock 'n' roll and it is Bruce Springsteen" was enough to keep me away for a couple of years.

Later that would be replaced by, like, any guy that Dave Marsh wrote a book about . . .

'Also, it seemed like such a pose, with the jeans and the T-shirt and everything. But sometimes I forget that if you hold a pose long enough it may take root.'

And then I might have thought, "Man, if he's hooked on that chick, he's not playing with a full deck . . ."

A remark I might have successfully directed at myself any number of times.

I don't know just what it was really. I guess I thought

Bruce was opera. I thought he was overblown. I thought it was trumped-up romanticism. I thought it was a lie. But if you tell a lie long enough . . .

But now I don't think Bruce lies. Bruce wouldn't lie, man! Bruce has imagination. I think he always had it, but it wasn't always so powerful. I think it got honed by the big beat.

I'm not sure how I figured it out. I think if you've got an ear and a radio you're going to figure it out sooner or later. I know I had "Born to Run" going through my head at one point, but I was determined to resist. I think when I finally was ready to give up was around the time of *The River*. Maybe I heard "Cadillac Ranch" on the radio and there was just no way not to like it.

But I'm one of those masses that went Bruce-crazy with *Born in the USA*. I got the promo in the mail and I played it and it was great, every song was great, and I kept playing it. A few days later I showed up at my favorite record store and I picked up all his albums and I went to the checkout counter and the cashier just couldn't believe it. "Oh no! You too?"

I guess I wasn't the only old new-wave person into this Bruce thing. This clerk seemed to think that all of her friends were dropping like flies to it. "Oh no! You too!?" She looked at me like "hadn't the Ramones and the Dolls and Iggy and Lou taught me anything?"

Now you can go around pointing out facts like that Lou himself said "Hey man, Springsteen is OK" on his live *Take No Prisoners* album several years ago (the same album on which he refers to Robert Christgau as "some asshole in the *Village Voice*"). You might mention that Springsteen is friends with David Johansen; that they both used to play upstairs at Max's around the same period. But you know it won't do any good. You know that some of your East Village friends will not be converted, not because of anything having to do with Bruce *per se*, but because they cannot bear the idea of liking anything so popular. You get the feeling that if Joey Ramone himself made the cover of *Time* and *Newsweek* simultaneously, they would be forced to drop him too and complain that he had sold out.

It's hard to accuse Bruce of selling out when he keeps his ticket prices low (like what? One third of the Jackson tour price?) and turned down the \$12 million Chrysler offered him to do a three-second ad spot, but then they can always come back and say: "Hey, \$12 million is nothing to him. He takes in over a million a show."

No, all you can say to these people is, "Hey, that's exactly how I felt. But have you seen the show? Hey, you really have to see the show! It's the greatest rock 'n' roll show I've ever seen."

This always gets 'em, because they know I've seen the Beatles, Stones, Hendrix, P-Funk, Iggy, Cream, Who, L.Z., Talking Heads, Ted Nugent, what have you. So then they give you that look like you've got this ultra-premature form of Alzheimer's that starts out in the so-called "pleasure pathways" of the brain. They look at you like you're a rock 'n' roll form of Moonie. But, hey, it was the greatest show I've ever seen. It was like rock 'n' roll and a gospel meeting and a party and the World Series rolled into one. We did the wave. We danced. We sang. All the way back in the last stadium row you could see people singing and dancing, and they knew all the words. Bruce and the band played for four hours, and at the end you were still ready to go.

What I really liked, and what some people really hate, was the sober ecstasy of the Bruce show. You hear that his band doesn't drink or drug on the road. They say that you couldn't do that stuff and keep up the pace. But that's almost beside the point. The point seems to be that in this case imagination is enough. It's enough to make you sing and dance all night. And the singing is better and the dancing is better, everybody drives home fine, and the next morning they wake up singing. That's imagination.

Then there's this thing where people have mixed up Bruce with Rambo. Rambo is the guy who posed



Deiri McMurtry, The New York Times



Anthony Corrao

with Reagan the same week his girlfriend's nude pictures were running in *Playboy* and his nude pictures were running in *Playgirl*. Bruce hasn't posed with any candidates, or, as far as we know, nude.

Bruce's America is not a cartoon. If you think it is, then pick up a cassette of the *Nebraska* album and pop it in the car deck and drive some interstate and get back to us.

I don't think Bruce is a goody-goody. I don't think he's holding back or reacting or faking it. The guy's got heart and soul. I bet he doesn't jack off. I bet he never told a girl he loved her just to get into her pants. Of course, I didn't either. I always meant it.

I saw a picture in the paper of Bruce playing in a charity softball game. He has a beautiful swing. You can tell a lot about people by what kind of shoes they wear, but maybe even more (with men anyway) by how they swing a bat. Bruce is a natural. He keeps his eye on the ball. He swings level. He follows through. Like in life.

I don't think of Bruce as some flag-waver riding the crest of yuppie reaction. I think of him as the guy who is proving once and for all that you don't have to be an asshole to be an artist.

Springsteen is a poet. He writes great words. But he's also a rocker. I listen to some of the older albums and I like them OK. But you live and learn. And if you live and learn right, you get better. I think with *Nebraska* Bruce really learned how to write and with *Born in the U.S.A.* he really learned how to rock. So I don't care that I just hopped on the bandwagon with the millions. It's just great right now. And I'm happy to be a very avant-garde mainstream

far-out regular guy.

Epilogue: I just read that there's a bar in L.A. where all they play is Bruce and Bruce-related music. I don't know if that means Little Steven and maybe Southside Johnny are played too, or if it's like more sweeping and includes such Bruce-esque combos as John Cafferty and Beaver Brown (which has a Clarence Clemons lookalike) or such regular guys as John Cougar, who now seems to be threatening to be original. Anyway, I figure if I start out for that bar right now, maybe I'll know a lot more by the next issue.

P.S.: We all know that Bruce is changing the world. I think it's for the better. He's already saving me money on clothing bills. But seriously, here's something to be considered:

Early in the 21st century a great many of the young men you meet will be named Bruce, maybe even most of them. This will be the greatest popularity of the name Bruce ever. My brother is named Bruce, so I can tell you, not long ago it was not a fun name to have. It was not exactly like being a boy named Sue, but the other little guys didn't treat a Bruce like a Jim either. Bruce got sand kicked in their faces. The only heroic Bruce back then was publicly wimpy and only anonymously bold—he had to put on a bat costume to rock out. But in a new generation, Bruce will rule. Arnold will have made quite a comeback too. But Bruce will rule.

—Glenn O'Brien

First, you must dispose of his wife. You disguise yourself as a chambermaid and get a job at a hotel where Bruce is staying with his wife on the tour. You know you are doing the right thing. Bruce will be happier with you. You are educated, you have studied anthropology. You can help Bruce with his music, give him ideas about American culture. You are a real woman.

You go into Bruce's room. His wife is lying on the bed wearing a T-shirt that says "Number 1 Groupie" and staring straight up at the ceiling. You tell Bruce's wife that Bruce has arranged for you to give her a facial and a massage: it's a surprise. "Isn't he sweet?" she says with a giggle.

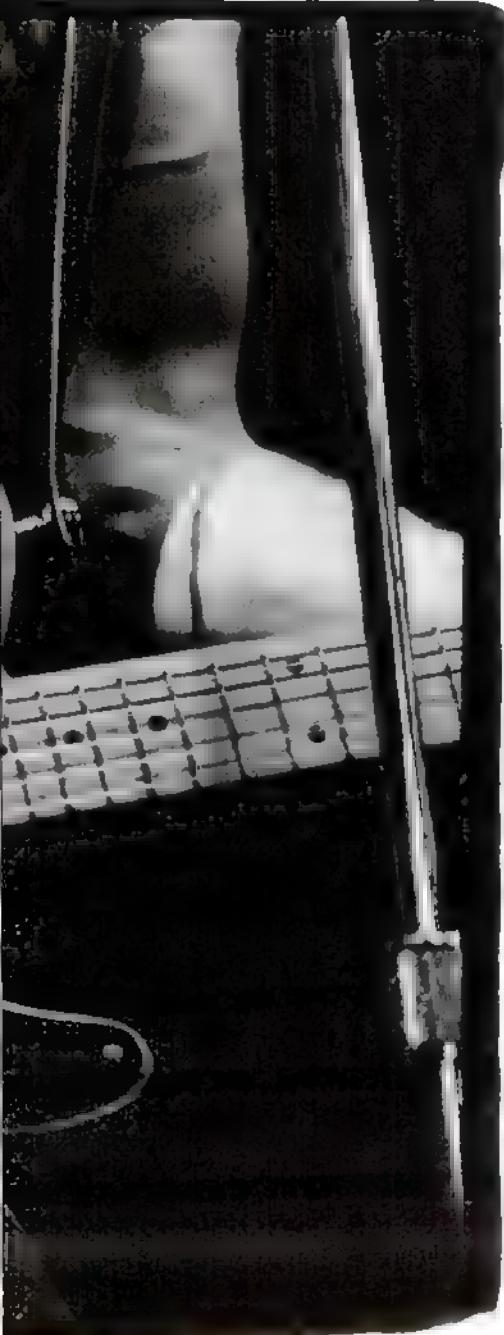
You whip out an ice pick hidden under your clothes and quickly give her a lobotomy: you've watched this technique in *The Frances Farmer Story* on TV. Bruce's wife doesn't even flinch.

After the operation, you present her with a bottle of Valium and an airplane ticket to Hollywood; the taxi's waiting outside. To your amazement, she does exactly what you tell her to do.

You're a bit worried about how Bruce will adjust to her absence and your presence, but when he returns to the room at three in the morning he doesn't even seem to notice the difference. You're dressed in her nightie, lying in bed, looking up at the ceiling. Bruce strips down to his jockey shorts and gets into bed with you. "Goodnight, honeybunch," he says. In the morning he still doesn't seem to realize there's been a change in personnel.

In real life, Bruce is larger than life. Though he appears small on television and on record covers,





when you stand next to him for the first time you understand that Bruce is the size of a monster. His hands are as large as your head; his body might take up an entire billboard. This is why, you know now, he must have guitars made specially for him.

At breakfast Bruce puts away a dozen eggs, meatballs, spaghetti, and pizza. He sings while he eats, American songs about food. He has plans, projects. He discusses it all with his business manager: the Bruce Springsteen Amusement Park, the Bruce Springsteen Las Vegas Casino, a chain of Bruce Springsteen bowling alleys.

Bruce decides that today you will buy a new home. You are very excited about this prospect. You imagine something along the lines of Graceland or an elegant Victorian mansion. "I'm surprised at you," Bruce says. "We agreed not to let my success go to your head."

He selects a small ranch-style house on a suburban street of an industrial New Jersey town. "You go rehearse, darling," you say. "I'll pick out the furnishings."

But Bruce wants to help with the decoration. He insists on ordering everything from Sears: a brown-and-white plaid couch trimmed with wood; a vinyl Laz-Y-Boy recliner; orange wall-to-wall carpeting. The bedroom, Bruce decides, will have mirrors on the ceiling, a waterbed with purple satin sheets, white shag carpeting, and two pinball machines. Everything he has chosen, he tells you, was made in the U.S.A.

In the afternoon, Bruce has a barbecue in the backyard. "Everybody's got to have a hobby, babe," he tells you. He wears a chef's hat and has his own special barbecue sauce—bottled Kraft's, which he doctors with ketchup and mustard. Though he only knows how to make one thing—dried-out chicken—everyone tells him it is the best they've ever had. You think it's a little strange that no one seems to notice that his wife is gone and you are there instead; but perhaps it's just that everyone is so busy telling Bruce how talented he is that they don't have time.

Soon you have made the adjustment to life with Bruce.

The only time Bruce ever feels like making love is when the four of you—you, Bruce, and his two bodyguards—are driving in his Mustang. He likes to park at various garbage dumps outside of Newark and, while the bodyguards wait outside, pull you into the back seat. He finds the atmosphere—rats, broken refrigerators, old mattresses, soup cans—stimulating. He prefers that you don't remove your clothes; he likes you to pretend to fight him off. The sun, descending through the heavy pollution, sinks slowly, a brilliant red ball changing slowly into violet and then night.

When Bruce isn't on tour, rehearsing with his band, recording an album, or writing new songs, his favorite pastime is visiting old-age homes and hospitals, where he sings to senior citizens until they beg him to stop. He explains that he finds it refreshing to be with real Americans, those who do not worship him, those who do not try to touch the edges of his clothing. But after a short time, even the sick old people discover that when Bruce plays to them they are cured.

The terminally ill recover after licking up just one drop of Bruce's sweat. Soon Bruce is in such demand at the nursing homes that he is forced to give it up. There is nothing Bruce can do that doesn't turn to gold. One day Bruce has a surprise for you. "I'm going to take you on a vacation, babe," he says. "You know, we were born to run." You are thrilled. At last you will get that trip to Europe; you will be pampered, you will visit the couture houses and select a fabulous wardrobe; you will go to Bulgari and grab a handful of jewels. You will be deferred to; everyone will want to be your friend in the hope of somehow getting close to Bruce.

"Oh Bruce, this is wonderful," you say. "Where will we go?"

"I bought a camper," Bruce says. "I thought we'd drive around, maybe even leave New Jersey."

You have always hated camping, but Bruce has yet another surprise—he's stocked the camper with food. Dehydrated scrambled eggs, pancake mix, beef jerky. "No more fast food for us," he says.

You travel all day; Bruce has decided he wants to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame. While Bruce drives he plays tapes of his music and sings along. You tell him you're impressed that he's memorized all the words. "So what do you think?" he says. "You like the music?"

Though your feet hurt—Bruce has bought you a pair of hiking boots a size too small—you tell him you think the music is wonderful. Never has a greater genius walked the face of the earth.

Unfortunately, Bruce is irritated by this. The two of you have your first fight. "You're just saying that," Bruce says. "You're just the same as all the rest. I thought you were different, but you're just trying to get on my good side by telling me I'm brilliant."

"What do you want from me?" you ask.

Bruce starts to cry. "I'm not really any good," he says.

"That's not true, Bruce," you say. "You mustn't feel discouraged. Your fans love you. A small boy was cured of cancer when he saw you on TV. You're up there with the greats: the Beatles, Christ, Gandhi, Lee Iacocca. You've totally restored New Jersey to its former glory. Once again, it's a proud state."

"It's not enough," Bruce says. "I was happier in the old days, when I was just Bruce, playing in my garage."

You're beginning to feel unhappy in your life with Bruce. Since Bruce spends so much time rehearsing, there is little for you to do but shop. Armed with credit cards and six bodyguards (to protect you from Bruce's angry women fans), you search the stores for some gift for Bruce that might please him. You buy foam coolers to hold beer, Smurf dolls, candy-flavored underwear, a television set he can wear on his wrist, a purebred Arabian colt. You hire three women to wrestle on his bed covered in mud.

Bruce thanks you politely but tells you, "I'm only interested in one thing."

"Me?" you say.

Bruce looks startled. "My music," he says.

To your surprise you learn you are pregnant, though you can't figure out how this could have happened. You think about what to name the baby. "How about Benjamin Springsteen?" you say.

"Too Jewish immigrant," Bruce says. "This kid is going to be an American, not some leftist from Paterson."

"How about Sunny Von?" you say.

"Sunny von Springsteen?" Bruce says. "I don't get it. No, there's only one name for a kid of mine."

"What?" you say, trying to consider the possibilities. Bruce is sitting on the couch, stroking his guitar. The phones are ringing nonstop, the press is banging on the door. You haven't been out of the house in three days. The floor is littered with boxes from Roy Rogers, cartons of White Castle burgers, empty cans of Coke. You wonder how you're going to fill up the rest of the day. You've already filled your nails, studied the Sears catalog, made a long-distance call to your mother.

At last Bruce speaks. "I'm going to call the kid Elvis," he says.

"What if it's a girl?" you say.

"Elvis," Bruce says. "Elvis, either way."

You fly to Hollywood to try and find his real wife. You finally track her down: she's working as a tour guide at a wax museum. "Admission to the museum is \$5," she says at the door. "The museum will close in 15 minutes."

"Don't you remember me?" you say. "I'm the person who gave you a lobotomy and shipped you off to Hollywood."

"If you say so," Bruce's wife says. "Thank you."

"I made a mistake," you say. "I did wrong. I have

your ticket here. You go back to Bruce."

His wife is willing, though she claims not to know what you're talking about. "But what about my job here?" she says. "I can't just leave."

You tell her you'll take over for her. Quickly, you rush her to the airport, push her onto the plane. You tell her to look after Bruce. "He can't live without you, you know," you say.

You wait to make sure her plane takes off on time. A sense of relief comes over you.

You have nowhere to go, nothing to do; you decide to return to the wax museum and make sure it's locked up for the night.

You have the keys to the door. The place is empty, the lights are off. Now you wander through the main hall. Here are Michael Jackson, Jack the Ripper, President Reagan, Sylvester Stallone, Muhammad Ali, Adolf Hitler. You are alone with all these men, waxy-faced, unmoving, each one a superstar.

Something violent starts to kick, then turns, in your stomach.

—Tama Janowitz

Bruce, uh, Springsteen? The youth-demographic Wayne Newton/Bette Midler? In this mag as opposed, y'know, to that other one? Is he even an issue anymore? (Don't tell me he's on the cover—I'll find out soon enough.)

I have never liked the youth-demographic Newton/Midler. I have nearly always loathed him. I've rarely been able to even look at the boring little prick without muttering expressions like "master of ersatz," "the absolute voice of the status quo," or "the emperor's new jeans and workshirt." Pompous as knee-jerk responses go, maybe, but here's this guy, see, the absolute nonentity of whose most prevalent guise ("earnestness") has always struck me, on sheer scale alone, as more than a trifle pompous incarnate. But fuck me (right?)—whuddo I know?

Basically, I've just never gotten the point. Well, I have gotten the point of his appeal to consumers of the rampantly consumable. That much is obvious: boogie on down, not only without guilt but with social conscience—all bases, or let's just say both bases, covered—three hours for the price of one.

It makes total sense, for inst, what my ladyfriend Irene sees in this shit. She's a show fan, see, Broadway and whatnot, a somewhat late (but eager) arrival to the rock-roll shores. She finally takes to rock and what she takes to is Bruce—and I ain't listening. Eventually she gets her way, sits me down perchance to educate me (out that I am), plays me some Bruce and, out that I am, I jump up (she forgot to tie me down), wave my arms (to the beat so she knows, at least, I am no crackpot), conduct the room to a round of "O! . . . klahoma! Where the wind comes sweepin' down the plain!" and dang me if she does not chuckle (as opposed, y'know, to sending me home) (out I forever will be) because (a) she is no fool and (b) I have got the sturm und drang of it not far from pert near correct. And I know—and she knows that I know—that Bruce is naught but her long-awaited Conrad Birdie, or whatever their names are from *West Side Story*, made flesh. Or at least made ongoing product.

Which is fucksure cool but, um, note the connection. Just note it.

Or, for further inst, take my pal Scott Kempner. Scott's basic rhythm-of-life sh!t has always been The Rock 'N' Roll Fan Club Meets Here. Before Bruce was his boss boy it was Peter Townshend. But ever since that week in '75 when its Face made the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, and all three trades, the Bruce Gestalt has, for Scott, role-played one consistently grand advertisement for The Power And Glory Of Rock Rock Rock 'N' Roll, as if by the mere fortuity of its scale 'n' bombast (not to mention its benignity) we are assured that—this time around—they cannot and will not dare bust "our music." Somehow, in this picture a seminal (and terminal) wedding of creative lifeblood to marketplace/culture death is



David Kennedy

overlooked (or ignored). But, heck, that's cool too—there's people, I'm told, who actually regard rock videos as gifts (as primary objects of experience!). And, hey, couldn't the, y'know, fact of Reagan be regarded as glorious evidence of the persistence of electoral demo . . . what's the word? . . . demography? I.e., you want a ring implanted in your cultural nose, well someone (by golly) will implant it.

But, mea culpa, I digress. The specific side of the Kempner plug-in to Bruce—sorry, Scott, but use you I must for nefarious purpose—is . . . well I'm not sure about now, but in '75 I asked him flat-out "Whuh?" and he says, "If the Fonz had a band it would be Springsteen." Yes! The Fonz!! This, of course, was before we knew, or could know, that the incredible lovable li'l leather schmuck, the most palatably inaccurate (yet life-affirming) peer group archetypal since Maynard G. Krebs, was but an accident on the road to grown-actor oblivion for one Henry Winkler. Can't knock actors as pump-primers for purported real things in principle, no sir, but when you've got your Ersatz Quotient up there in a supreme falsification-of-reality range . . . hey (weepy-eyed stick-in-the-mud humanist that I am), I'm knocking. But not mocking. It is sad what folks sometimes fall for. And remain fallen for ten fucking years down the chute . . . fuggit.

Or for final inst, 'cause I'm itching to get to what genuinely pisses me off—back at the dawn of the '80s I had this punk show on a Pacifica station that the Revolutionary Communist Party was bugging me to play their band Prairie Fire on. Finally I go see 'em and they're, well, they're not Public Image (or the Fall) (or even the Clash). They're just your basic formally reactionary get-down boogie band with largely implicit

rad/topical "message" superadded. Structurally sound reiterators of an already mega-told tale (American Music Revisits American Myth); one more entry in—and I don't really mean to insult them—the Springsteen Sweepstakes. Far from being insulted, their spokesperson hears the Bruce reference and . . . like wow. Gee, she tells me, if only they could harness that familiar sound, Bruce's or its ilk, which People and y'know Workers already relate to, and wow, like songs're so liberating and freeing and . . . and god am I one godless stick in the mud.

I hit her with (and she rejects) my whole entire rant re: the need to reject Prevailing Form (the "No Excuse for Bruce After Punk" routine). She winces at but stands up to my driveline re: Bruce as (a) Hubert Humphrey (if even that much) in *contempo*-softshoe drag; (b) nose-ring yanker of the palace guard; (c) learning-disabled child of the '60s to whom that decade never even registered. We're bouncing all this one-dimensional quasi-political claptrap and then we start talking lyrics, poetics. Bruce's, that is. We're no longer talking *Prairie Fire*. We bounce "bourgeois" about. I ask (pray tell) what the nonbourgeois—shall we even maybe say revolutionary?—import might be of such Springsteenisms as *wind blows through my hair (and yours) in my '56 Chevy* and *my wonderful new sneakers embrace bright lights of etc.* And she says, "Bourgeois romantic or not, such lyrics give hope to so many." And so be it.

And so be it all. I mean, yeah, I certainly can dig how among the teeming zillions various lames and non-lames alike have plugged into Bruce. It seems like the sum of the some-of-the-people you can fool all of the time has gotten a little unwieldy, but at heart I'm a pluralist. Not all mass delusions make me puke. I

just cannot see, really I can't, a single sight, sound, or accident within the delusion that is anything but monochromatic blah.

Is there anything grimmer and grayer than the Myth Of America? I am sick of the Myth Of America. Granted, Bruce's America is at least fractionally different from Rambo's—a good bad sitcom compared to a bad bad one—but since we're talking belief systems and the goddam marketplace, how many billion consumers do you think have bought both? Bruce and Rambo. Without missing a beat.

None of which would mean shit to a shithook—and, really, let's not be so ad mass *hominem*—if it weren't for what Bruce, or his shill Dave Marsh, did last October to avoid endangering any possible cross-constituency of consumers of the left and/or right. A couple weeks left till the election—remember?—and Reagan starts quoting Bruce. But instead of saddling his sturm und drang, riding out and yelling, "Vote for Walter! Our President wants us dead!" (and winning Walt Defaware and possibly Hawaii in the process), the little cocksucker passes it on to his publicist Barbara Carr, who passes it to her wonderful husband David. I don't remember the exact words, I've looked and I just can't find it, but "rock critic Dave Marsh" did an outstanding hem-haw on page one of the respected newsheet I happened to catch. Something to the effect that if the President would only look at such and such a Springsteen album cut, he would clearly see that au contraire blah blah blah. Don't say anything, don't stir anything, don't lose a single customer! *Fuck these people!!*

And fuck me for getting so steamed. I'm an old grouch alright, but after punk, after Reagan—after everything and anything—why does this transparent dogshit remain an issue, for crying out loud? Next we'll be asked to write about Garfield the Cat.

—Richard Meltzer

Bruce Springsteen's immense appeal is due largely to his lunchpail. When he shows up for work, he's never without it. Bruce's lunchpail is chrome, with a round lid and black handle, about the size of a small house that a large hero sandwich can live in. Or a six-pack. When Bruce drives to work, his lunchpail sits next to him in the passenger seat of his pink Cadillac. Once, someone who had lost his job came up to Bruce while he was waiting for a light and Bruce opened his lunchpail and gave the guy half his sandwich.

Bruce's lunchpail has been up and down the Turnpike; to the swamps of New Jersey; to Raceway Park in Englishtown, New Jersey; and to a Giants football game. Bruce Springsteen's lunchpail has been through the Holland Tunnel. Bruce's lunchpail has been to places other lunchboxes only dream about.

Bruce, of course, is not the only rock star with a lunchpail. Wham! has one (in fact, two), but who wants a "haircut" lunchbox. Billy Idol's got one that's never got any lunch in it. And Madonna's got one, but it's got a hole in it.

Most rock stars don't carry a lunchpail to work. They prefer crowded restaurants, where they sit at choice tables and order up a storm. Not Bruce. When the lunch whistle blows, Bruce leans against a wall and eats out of his lunchpail, except when he's really slumming; then he paper-bags it. Sometimes, when Bruce feels like eating somewhere extravagant, like at a sidewalk cafe, he sets up a card table, chair, and umbrella outside his apartment building and eats his lunch there.

New York Yankee Don Mattingly, the Bruce Springsteen of baseball, also shows up for work with his lunchpail—a Bruce Springsteen lunchpail.

Ronald Reagan once asked Bruce for his lunchpail, but Bruce said no way. Lee Iacocca called Bruce and offered him \$12 million to use his lunchpail to promote Chryslers, but Bruce was out to lunch.

—Scott Cohen

What is refreshing and encouraging about Bruce Springsteen is his ability to translate both the form and some of the content of the blues. Springsteen is an American shouter, like the black country blues shouters from Leadbelly on, with an ear to James Brown and Wilson Pickett.

Springsteen's shouter style is apparent in "We Are the World," while the lyrical social consciousness of *Born in the U.S.A.* added yeast to his public and commercial persona. He's the voice of working-class youth, we have heard, and there's much truth in that. Would that more young Americans free of the double maw of working-class economic insecurity and lack of education were so clear as Springsteen as to what being born in the U.S.A. yokes working-class whites (and blacks) to. And even though Springsteen himself, as a superstar, must continually affirm the myth of being "free, white, and 21," his willingness to dispute that illusion in the real America is healthy and important.

What makes Springsteen so convincing, besides his appropriation of the blues shouter's voice, is the nature of his concerns. The often tragic poetry of the blues is packed with reflections on a brutal society in which the singers are victims, lonely, broke, and hungry. Springsteen describes a visible, living America with its obvious flaws, a real world. His American blues are solid and not given to minstrelsy. Their authenticity is no doubt due to his understanding of what old blues songs, and Woody Guthrie's too for that matter, mean.

What amazes is the whole "Boss" thing. It creates a false relationship to traditional blues players that even Springsteen himself doesn't desire. Springsteen knows he's not Joe Turner, "The Boss of the Blues." He has also demonstrated that he feels closer to the common people than to the "bosses." Springsteen's persona, for example—the working-class youth checking out reality—would condemn the individuality embodied by the trend-making elite who retard music lovers, as separate and unequal as we are.

One wonders, though, at the flush of the Springsteen explosion revved up by his recent *Born in the U.S.A.*

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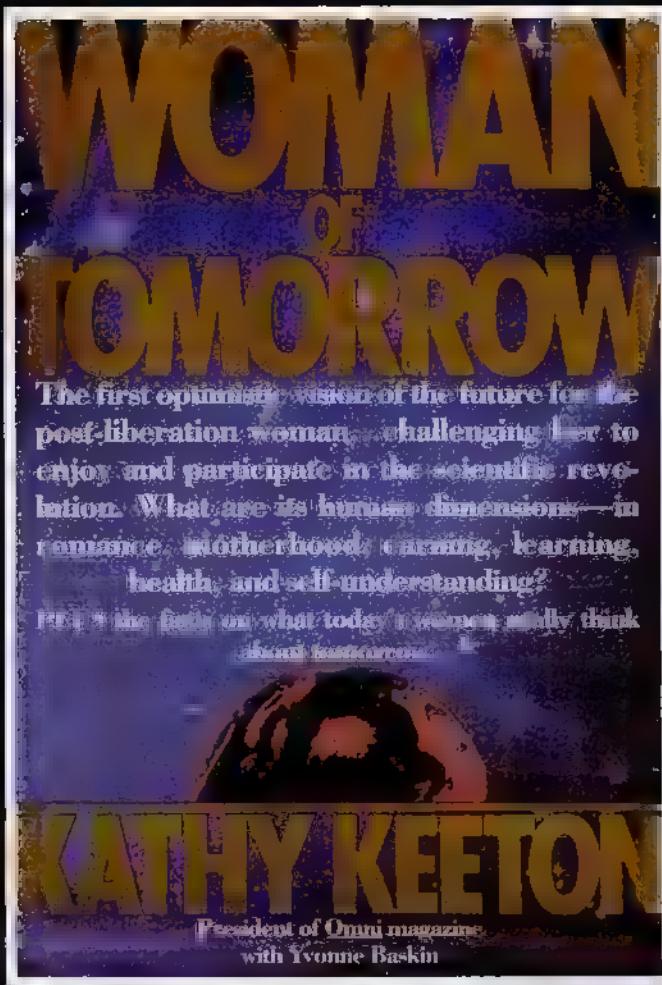


Dean Mullan / Bruce Springsteen



Spencer Richards

BEGIN TODAY TO BECOME A WOMAN OF TOMORROW



The future you can influence it—or be overwhelmed by it. Rarely does a book challenge and inspire its reader to change her very life. Now the limitless possibilities of that future are explored and explained in this landmark book by Kathy Keeton, president of *Omni* magazine. Already being hailed as the "megatrends for women," here is an optimistic view of the ways science will affect women's concerns (health, sex,

men, children, careers, families, homes) as well as a revealing survey of women's attitudes towards careers in space, test-tube babies, robots in the home, and other revolutionary trends. *Woman of Tomorrow* is filled with possibilities. If you care about the future, and women's role in it, you owe it to yourself and your children to learn how women will use technology to shape that future. To be a woman of tomorrow you have to begin today.

AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD—ST. MARTIN'S/MAREK

NEW SOUNDS

It used to be that you could play a Steve Reich piece with a couple of microphones and amplifiers. Now minimalism's maximalist is composing for symphony orchestras—without forsaking his innovative touch.

Column by John Schaefer

First you climbed up five flights of rickety stairs. Assuming you didn't go crashing through, your next step was to get a good seat. More often than not, this meant the floor, near enough to the musicians to allow you to get the full effect of the music, yet near enough to the door for you to get out easily if that effect was just too much to take. Then a small band of musicians would come in and play a highly repetitive, pulsating, almost hypnotic form of music in a style that was becoming known as minimalism. This was a familiar scene in the lofts and art galleries of New York's seedy Soho district in the late '60s and early '70s. Composers such as Steve Reich and Philip Glass considered a concert a success if it drew 25 people. Fifteen years later, Reich's idea of success has changed.

"On my piano at this very moment," Reich says from his Vermont hideaway, "is a piece I've just started for the St. Louis Symphony. They're scheduled to debut it on April 3 and they'll play it at Carnegie Hall on April 11. The European premiere is already set, too." Quite a change from small performances in dingy Soho lofts. Equally remarkable has been the growth in Reich's music during the past 15 years. "You can see a common thread," he says. "But, naturally, there are also great differences." His style has developed from spare, simple exercises in rhythm to grand choral/orchestral works such as 1984's *The Desert Music*, Reich's latest release. But his basic concerns remain the same—complex, interlocking rhythmic patterns, colorful combinations of instruments, and a rapid, rock-steady pulse to keep the whole thing moving.

Reich's music has been controversial since his early tape pieces in 1965 and '66. Come Out and It's Gonna Rain

used unlikely sound sources—a young black man who'd been injured by the police in the first and a street-corner preacher in the second—and layered those tapes on top of themselves again and again. Then the piece's layers would move out of sync with each other, eventually causing all sorts of striking acoustic effects. Such early works seemed more about the nature of sound than about music. 1968's *Pendulum Music*, for example, consists of microphones swinging over amplifiers, and as anyone who's ever suffered through an overamplified rock concert knows, mikes too close to amps produce feedback. When the microphones swing, they emit a short blip of feedback each time they pass the amps. As the arc of their motion decreases, the feedback increases. Eventually the mikes stop moving, coming to rest right over the amplifiers, and the feedback becomes continuous. That's the end of the piece.

"*Pendulum Music* was always an exceptional piece," Reich explains. "The best way to do it is with the crummiest material possible. That way the piece has a certain charm and humor. If you use good hi-fi equipment, you can actually hurt somebody."

It's a far cry from that sort of music-making to the symphonic intricacies of *The Desert Music*. Yet Reich has made the transition and has become one of America's most important "new music" composers in the process. "A lot of things are changing," Reich observes. "At first, when I looked at the orchestra as an outsider, I saw musicians who could be my father or grandfather. I knew they wouldn't be able to play my music." Now orchestral musicians can not only play Reich's music, they play it well. Some are even familiar with the techniques Reich himself uses. He recalls attending a concert of his music in San Francisco and watching two of the orchestra's percussionists setting up on either side of one marimba—something Reich's group does a lot. "I asked why they were doing that when the score calls for two marimbas," says Reich. "And they said, 'We've seen your group do it and it looks like more fun that way.'"

The term "minimalist" might describe *Pendulum Music* or even 1971's *Drumming*, with its insistent, apparently unchanging drum and marimba rhythms, but nothing's minimal about such works as 1976's *Music for 18 Musicians*. Listening to one of Reich's later works is like unraveling a tapestry—it may appear simple on the surface, but a complex weave of different musical strands pulses underneath: mallet percussion here joins voices there, while pianos sneak in with the strings somewhere in the middle.

Reich insists that he's moved to larger



Photo by Mark Weber

forms simply out of "musical necessity." The basic thrust, he says, has always been there: "In 1971, my ensemble jumped to 12 people because *Drumming* demanded that. In *Music for 18 Musicians* it got larger again. *Music for a Large Ensemble* obviously made it bigger still." Reich's works in the '70s grew in size and complexity, and his audience grew with him. But whether the younger contingent of Reich fans will follow his move to something as "old-fashioned" as orchestral music remains to be seen. During the '60s and '70s,

as orchestral music goes, Steve Reich has arrived. He's been asked to write another piece for the St. Louis Symphony for their 75th anniversary in 1987, and works as well for the San Francisco Symphony and the London Sinfonietta.

October brought Reich's 49th birthday and a period of accelerated activity. *The Desert Music* has just been released; his *Sextet* will be performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (B.A.M.) in late October; then B.A.M.'s touring program will send *The Desert Music* and its composer on a whirlwind tour through Richmond, Washington, Philadelphia, Boston, Burlington, and Ottawa in January, followed by a trip to Europe.

Taking *The Desert Music* on the road could be a logistical nightmare: the work normally uses 160 musicians. So Reich will tour with a scaled-down version he created for the Paris-based Ensemble Intercontemporain.

"Instead of the whole string section I use 13 strings and amplify them; a synthesizer takes the brass parts," he says. "So this version uses only 40 people."

The Desert Music is one of Reich's finest works, though past performances have varied widely in quality. The album features Reich's ensemble along with most of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, a chorus (the texts are by William Carlos Williams), and conductor Michael Tilson Thomas, one of the longtime champions of Reich's music. The performance is right on the money, and the work itself, gradually unfolding in the best Reichian style, is absolutely gorgeous. "It's really the first piece to engage the orchestra fully," he claims. "In the earlier works, the strings simply laid down the harmonic groundwork, like a rug on the floor. Here the strings

Listening to one of Reich's later works is like unraveling a tapestry—it may appear simple on the surface, but a complex weave of different musical strands pulses underneath.

the audience at orchestra concerts got steadily older; no one under 35 seemed interested. Along with Glass and Adams, Reich has given symphony managers something to cheer about. They may hate the music—many people still claim it sounds like a huge broken needle—but they hope the so-called minimalists will attract a younger audience to concert halls.

Reich's orchestral talents are now in wide demand. *The Desert Music* has convinced many listeners (and apparently many conductors) that as far

continued on p. 66





At last there's a band that's not afraid to crank their guitars and pick up where *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* left off.

THE UNFORGIVEN

The Unforgiven is a guitar band. With a capital G. Five of 'em. Todd Ross (who extracts sounds from his guitar that are like coyote yowls) and Johnny Hickman intertwine leads. Twin rhythm guitars, wielded by a pair of Joneses—John Henry, the group's leader and most verbal member, and Mike (known as "Just" Jones)—add a clean wall-of-guitar sound. Four-part vocal harmonies glaze John Henry's gut-busting three-octave leads like icing on the beefcake. Bassist Mike Finn plays like a drummer, not a frustrated guitar player, keeping his parts strong and simple, pumping up the bottom end with no damage to the shiny veneer. Drummer Alan Waddington, who tossed out his high-hat cymbals—and his drum stool—in favor of more toms, hammers out relentless, cavalrylike cadences and is the power drive for this intricately functioning machine. "I wanted to put Aaron Copland's Americana together with fist-raising teenage rock 'n' roll anthems. And for chrissake, why waste time trying to categorize music? Just sing along if you know the words," says John Henry in summation of the band's direction.

The group is smartly choreographed, carrying their guitars down around their knees. They're certainly no pain to look at, either. Mickey Finn (who gets steamy love letters almost daily from smitten teenage girls in the elementary English class he teaches in an Orange County public school) is a one-man crush-inspiration society, and he's got plenty of competition in this group. Hickman's smile could light up the desert on a moonless night, and "Just" Jones is an ultra-cool Clint Eastwood type.

They dress like they just rode out of a spaghetti western: leather britches (not too tight), three-quarter length high-plains overcoats, dusty boots (not too pointy-toed), broad-brimmed hats, silver conchas, and starched white shirts (usually sweat-drenched and draped over their amps by mid-set).

Photo: Scott Soder

Article by Shelly da Cunha

Preceding page: (L-R) Todd Ross, John Hickman, John Henry Jones, Alan Waddington III, Mike Finn, "Just" Jones; this page, top and bottom: the wall of guitars hangs redneck bars; center: home on the range.

Ross unofficially monitors the authenticity of the group's wardrobe; he's fascinated by the Wild West era.

An Unforgiven show is a trip into the pages of a boys' magazine or a backyard game with the kids next door—cowboys and Indians, war and dust, horses and gunpowder. It's fun. Their "manly men" posture is pretty much designed for self-amusement, and if you laugh too, all the better.

John Henry: "I can honestly say I'm not sexist. When I was 9 years old, at Sycamore Elementary School, a 10-year-old blonde named Carol beat me mercilessly to a pulp, thereby instilling in me an undying respect for the opposite sex." The Unforgiven's redefinition of the American Man—a species that has been abhorred and ignored, unfashionable for nearly two decades—is not a chauvinistic stance. They don't seem to be looking for love slaves or women to borrow money from.

The group's stand against drugs, alcohol, and nicotine is a strong part of its collective persona, though it's not particularly political. "I'm not too philosophical about this. We just can't do what we have to do on stage if we're wasted," says John Henry. The drugaholic lifestyle just doesn't fit in with their "self-reliance—self protection" motto. "I wouldn't worry about self-protection so much if Charles Bronson was in office. At least then we'd have a president who was also a good actor."

The Unforgiven begin rehearsals by running and working out, which John Henry says has the secondary effect of releasing endorphins, a natural drug, into the system, so they get high for free. "We run, lift weights—sweating and grunting together, you know, it's like male bonding, we're family . . . and then we can take off our shirts on stage, impress girls, and not be embarrassed," John Henry says,

nothing being sacred.

The physical-fitness routine has become a source of band humor. They've jokingly considered starting an "Unforgiven Training Camp," in which another group with a big future but an equally big self-destructive bent would tour with them and be "whipped into shape." The Replacements have been nominated as prime candidates for the first tour.

The Unforgiven has been called an understudy for the Alarm. John Henry's quasi-redneck response to these accusations: "We're taller than the Alarm. We've got more guitars than the Alarm. And we could kick their asses if we had to."



Andrea Senni



John Scarpelli

The fine print on their pedigree reads American Indian. Ross and both the Joneses lay claim to a hefty share of Cherokee blood, and Hickman is one-quarter Sioux. "Ghost Dance" is their litany to these ancestors: "I'm the son of a true American, yes I am, yes I am/ I'm the son of a Cherokee Indian . . . And I'm damn proud of it . . . Yippee-ay-oh . . ." John Henry on his family history: "In the '30s my grandfather lived in Oklahoma, where he was called a half-breed. Those were fighting words in Tulsa back in those days. I was named after him. My dad says he was John Steinbeck's traveling companion and inspiration for one of the lead characters in *The Grapes of Wrath*." Waddington, though not an Indian, is one of those rare native sons of California and a direct descendant of the last Spanish governor of the territory, José Arguello.

The group lives in San Bernardino

John Henry: "Why waste time trying to categorize music? Just sing along if you know the words."

County, in Upland, Pomona, Corona, Redlands, and Claremont—small towns out in the valley of the "Great Inland Empire." California's answer to Oklahoma, the area was settled in large part by people who were fleeing the horrors of the dust bowl in the '30s and searching for the "golden life." The almost-rural atmosphere is redolent of kids on bikes and mothers frying chicken. The Unforgiven believe their colorful antecedents and their sub-

suburban upbringing is their source of inspiration.

Unforgiven shows are usually packed, and someone interesting usually turns up to sit in—Moon Unit or Dweezil Zappa, Todd Ross's brother Jeff from Rank and File, Prince's tour drummer, Bobby Z. Besides attracting a diverse crowd (from yup-type once-a-month clubgoers to ennui-ridden scenesters), the group inspired one of the most heated bidding wars L.A. has seen in years, A&R ace Peter Philbin, who recently left Columbia, finally won them over to Elektra for major bucks.

The Unforgiven is the latest edition in a trend that's being set by bands like Rank and File, Lone Justice, and Los Lobos. The genre has been labeled "garage band" for lack of a better term and because none of them rely much on synthesized sound. It's earthy, gritty, and about as guileless as pop music gets.



moving images

Cisco and Egbert take a look at music video channels for mature, responsible people who clean their rooms without being told; and a drug-free Richard Gehr tackles the William Burroughs myth.

CISCO & EGBERT AT THE VIDEOS

CISCO: Hi, I'm Gene Cisco, rock video critic of the Middletown Daily Mirror.

EGBERT: And I'm Roger Egbert, rock video critic of the Middletown Star-Ledger. This month At the Videos we'll be presenting a special report on VH-1, the new music video channel for grown-ups.

CISCO: What it is, who's on it . . .

EGBERT: And how it's different from MTV, both in the artists and in the audience it's targeted to.

CISCO: Oh, my aching bones.

EGBERT: Do you think this channel is aimed at old people?

CISCO: I don't know, but we are starting out with my grandfather's favorite video. This is Michael Murphy doing "Disenchanted."

EGBERT: This takes place in an adobe cocktail lounge somewhere in the arid Southwest. There's an old man sitting at the bar slugging down double shots of whiskey while Michael Murphy and his band play. There's also some kind of interracial love scenario going on, which would seem to be taking place in Murphy's imagination. By the way, there are a lot of Indians in this bar.

CISCO: More Indians than I've ever seen in one bar. If *Billy Jack* were a rock video, this would be it.

EGBERT: Actually, Michael Murphy looks very much like one of the acts you'd see on MTV. There are just a few subtle differences. The lonely drinker at the bar is definitely a Social Security recipient.

CISCO: Not for long, if the President has his way.

EGBERT: If you notice, Murphy's drummer has completely gray hair.

CISCO: I wonder how many beards we'll see in this month's videos.

EGBERT: One thing we have to look for this month is subliminal product endorsements. I was talking to someone in the video business recently and he said the record companies are sick of paying for these videos and are exploring other avenues of rock video financing. Which means companies paying to have their champagne drunk in a video, or their sunglasses worn, or their designer jeans fondled. Let's spot products. Unfortunately, we can't tell what kind of whiskey this guy is nodding out on, just that it's brown as usual.

CISCO: Now the old drunk's crying into his whiskey. You wouldn't see that on MTV.

EGBERT: No, the kids couldn't take it.

CISCO: Does VH-1 seem much different from MTV so far, Rog?

EGBERT: Well, we've only seen one video so far, but I think this channel is probably designed to be ambient video—background video. Something to be played while housewives do the ironing or knead the meatloaf.

CISCO: Which would make it just the

thing for subliminal product messages. EGBERT: This way they can watch TV while performing tasks too complicated to do while watching something as demanding as, say, *All My Children*.

CISCO: Sort of like the Yule Log show, Roger.

EGBERT: Exactly. Hey . . . Country Music Television! This isn't VH-1!

CISCO: I didn't know they had country MTV!

EGBERT: Gol-dang!

CISCO: According to this ad, country folk are into income protection. You'd never see an insurance ad on MTV.

EGBERT: True. If you notice, the symbol of this insurance company is an Indian. Maybe Mutual of Omaha put up the money for that Michael Murphy video.

CISCO: By the way, Roger, have you been thinking about your future?

EGBERT: I have a money market account. Life insurance is too scary for me. I can't even sit through a Motley Crue video. This next video looks really country. It starts out with a banjo lit in a very

ers, Gene Autry, and—who's that guy? EGBERT: It might be Tom Mix, but I'm not old enough to know for sure.

CISCO: These girls are rolling their own cigarettes, polishing their own saddles, building their own home . . .

EGBERT: Now they're having a hoedown with no men. Do you think the ones in skirts are different from the ones in blue jeans?

CISCO: What do you mean, different?

EGBERT: Like butch vs. fem. I mean, these are women without men. These are cowgirls alone on the range.

CISCO: Wow, look at this. Here's some great animation. Really abstract drawings of horses running around.

EGBERT: This is great! Now the girls are posed just like the Beatles on the cover of *Meet the Beatles*. Gee, maybe we've finally found our medium. I like this Country MTV.

CISCO: At least I know the words to this song.

EGBERT: But doesn't it seem more human and accessible? That was a terrific

John Fogerty



Just Lones

modern way.

CISCO: This is "Stroker Ace" by Charlie Daniels. It's a country rap song, and it's just chock full o' beards.

EGBERT: If *The Dukes of Hazzard* was shot like *Miami Vice*, this is what it would look like.

CISCO: MTV videos seem to be influenced a lot by Masters of the Universe cartoons, but this seems to have a Porcelana Fada Creme influence. This seems to be aimed at a more mature audience.

EGBERT: Maybe country is generational music. My mother loves country music, and she hates the country—her hay fever is too bad to go there. This next video

looks pretty youthful. It starts out with four country girls pointing at a horse—cut to John Wayne looking young and handsome.

CISCO: This is a country version of the Beatles' "I'm Falling" by Calamity Jane, the fab four of country girls. There are shots of them falling into a gravel pit, intercut with shots of the Duke, Roy Rog-

ers. Next we have "Tougher Than Leather" by Willie Nelson.

CISCO: Willie's is the fourth beard so far. At least the Calamity Janes didn't have beards.

EGBERT: We're back in the Old West. It's high noon once again, and Willie's having a showdown in the streets of what is probably Laredo.

CISCO: Willie just shot down another man. It was a fair fight, even though the other guy had the sun in his eyes. And Willie puts another notch on his gun.

EGBERT: With his thumbnail! Can you believe that?

CISCO: He's a tough guy.

EGBERT: How long would it take to put a notch on your gun using your thumbnail?

CISCO: People weren't in such a hurry back then.

EGBERT: I'm sure there's going to be another insurance ad after this. That guy was shot down in the prime of his life. His poor widow is horrified.

CISCO: Now Willie is riding out of town. He sure is a good rider. I wonder what kind of cowboys we would have made. How many trails lead to town?

EGBERT: I'd say it depends on the town.

CISCO: Say Abilene.

EGBERT: Abilene? I'd say at least four. One north, one south, one east, one west. At least. There might even be one like the beltway that circles Washington. There might have been a Beltway Trail that circled Abilene.

CISCO: There probably wasn't much traffic. I imagine people ran into each other more on those trails.

EGBERT: Yeah, it's harder to ignore someone when you're going four miles an hour. Let's see if we can find VH-1. Hey, here it is.

CISCO: Hey, look, it's Frankie Crocker.

EGBERT: He's the VJ! I can remember when he was just a DJ.

CISCO: Next we have a medley from the Broadway show *Leader of the Pack* by various artists.

EGBERT: This starts out with a big pack of bikers. They look just like the bikers you see on MTV except they have gray in their beards and all have on helmets. This is from the show based on all the great Ellie Greenwich oldies.

CISCO: If the real leader of the pack had been wearing a helmet, there wouldn't have been anything to write a song about.

EGBERT: They're segueing into various production numbers from the show. "Da Doo Ron Ron," "My Baby Does the Hanky Panky," Ecch! This guy doing "Hanky Panky" looks like he won *Star Search*, and he's backed up by three chorus boys who look like they're from the Fire Island stock company of *Grease*. I think if Tommy James had any suspicion that something like this might come of it, he and the Shondells never would have done this song.

CISCO: Now they're doing the Crystals' "And Then He Kissed Me." And now "River Deep, Mountain High."

EGBERT: This is a really ugly set.

CISCO: It looks like a garish health club.

EGBERT: Some of the dancing isn't bad. It's hard not to like a girl in a beehive doing the pony. But this is depressing. This is really for old people. It wouldn't be so depressing if the cast was more in the senior citizen range, doing the watusi in their walkers.

CISCO: Next we have Billy Ocean doing "Mystery Lady." This is one of those sappy videos. He's trying to write a letter to a mystery lady.

EGBERT: Now he's walking down the fire escape of his inner-city building, which just happens to be on a giant soundstage flooded with light from pink and blue gels. Mystery ladies keep appearing and disappearing in a smoky haze. In this video you can be sure the haze isn't marijuana smoke. It's probably smoke from Captain Black pipe tobacco.

CISCO: It's probably the haze of cataracts forming on your pupils.

EGBERT: There are a lot of consumer



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products in this video. He's got a TEAC reel-to-reel and a Mercedes. Do you think Mercedes chipped in on this video?

CISCO: No, it would look really dumb if Ocean only had a Chevette at his age.

EGBERT: I can't really relate to that, Gene. Maybe it's because I drive a '78 Toyota. Of course, I'm not Billy Ocean, thank God. You know, if you just close your eyes and listen to this song, it's really kind of soulful. But if you look at it, it's awful. It would be soulful if he was wearing a torn T-shirt, sitting on a steel girder in a hard hat, eating out of a lunch pail. But I guess artists want realism. They want to be seen amid the splendor of wealth and the symbols of their achievement. Like this velour body suit and a \$500 phone.

CISCO: I don't see any evidence of a mystery lady here.

EGBERT: The mystery is that he has a few dozen ladies and he's keeping them all in the dark.

CISCO: Next we have John Fogerty doing "Centerfield."

EGBERT: Here's an artist who has crossed over from MTV to VH-1. This is a great video. It starts off with a rush of baseball cards, Mickey Mantle and many, many more, including one of my big favorites, Larry Doby, the first black player in the American League. This is great. Ebbets Field. Yankee Stadium.

CISCO: Now we have documentary footage of lots of great center fielders: Ted Williams, Hank Aaron, Stan the Man, Babe Ruth...

EGBERT: Look at how much classier the Yankee uniforms looked before they replaced the wool with polyester. Also, the outfield fence is so short. That would come up to about Dave Winfield's knees! Wow, look at Mel Allen with dark hair! Wow! Willie Mays playing stickball!

CISCO: Joe DiMaggio making a spectacular over-the-shoulder catch!

EGBERT: I could watch about five more hours of this song.

CISCO: There's Yogi Berra jumping on Whitey Ford after winning the '61 Series.

EGBERT: Probably the best video we've ever seen. My only complaint is that there wasn't enough Mantle. Also, they could have used Willie Mays' great series catch against the Indians, speaking of centerfield. But that is a great video.

CISCO: Next we have Dan Fogelberg doing "The Language of Love."

EGBERT: This is very rock 'n' roll-sounding for VH-1. It's almost hard rock. But it's also very, very clean. Absolutely everything is white: white clothes, walls, floors, pianos, people.

CISCO: And here's another beard—although the beard itself is not as white as the average beard on Country MTV.

EGBERT: I do think it's interesting, though, that this is on the adult station even though it's rock 'n' roll and Fogelberg uses the same moves you would find on Bryan Adams or John Cougar.

CISCO: So I guess you're wondering why this video is on VH-1.

EGBERT: I'm not really wondering. I have my theories. It must have to do with seniority. After you've spent enough years on MTV they move you up to VH-1. If you're clean enough. Dan Fogelberg is spotless.

CISCO: There is a lot less squalor. There aren't any videos done in junkyards,

basement grottos, ghetto alleys.

EGBERT: There isn't even a footprint in this video. They must be wearing new sneakers. And that makes a lot of sense if this station is aimed at housewives. You want it really, really clean.

CISCO: Here's Frankie Crocker again. Gee, he's really toned down. Frankie Crocker used to have a fashion image based on a cocaine-dealer aesthetic. He was just on radio then, but his image kind of seeped out of the speakers. I used to know when Frankie was in my house. Even when I was ironing and had the radio on, I'd be looking over my shoulder.

EGBERT: And now?

CISCO: Now Frankie Crocker looks like a Yuppie.

EGBERT: It's like they made a version of *The Big Chill* with Shaft and Superfly. *The Big Chill Out*.

CISCO: I feel paranoid.

EGBERT: Let's put Country TV back on. Yeah, that's more like it.

CISCO: A big tour bus is pulling up to a country gas station. The gas station owner is peering out his window; he can't believe a bus this lavish would pull up to his pump. A door opens, a step slides out, and out of the bus comes...

EGBERT: Is that Paul Newman? No it's just a bus driver. And now George Jones is getting out of the bus. Do you think there's a bar on that bus? Or two?

CISCO: The gas station man can't believe George Jones has stopped for gas at his station. Since they put in the interstate all the big country stars who used to stop there dried up. His life was ruined by the interstate highway system.

EGBERT: The attendant brings out this guitar that's been autographed by Waylon, Hank, Lefty, Willie... and he takes George inside the gas station, which is just chockful of memories.

CISCO: This could be the Country Music Hall of Fame. There's pictures, memorabilia, lampshades, curtains, drapes. I wish this guy would decorate my apartment. EGBERT: There's a picture of Willie Nelson when he looked just like Rusty Staub. There's Johnny Cash as a greaser. Merle Haggard with not a gray hair on his head. The name of this song is "Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?"

CISCO: There's a picture of that country singer who died in a plane crash and all they found was her mascara wand.

EGBERT: Yes, Lord, who's gonna fill their shoes. Notice the calendar says December 1982. I guess that's when the old man stopped caring, the month the music died. There are a lot of shots of a product called Pink Lotion in this video. It seems to be a dishwashing liquid. You don't suppose they put up some of the money for this?

CISCO: No. Every country music cliche is in this room, so that must be the brand the country manicurists soak people's fingers in. Wasn't George Jones married to Tammy Wynette?

EGBERT: A few times, if I'm not mistaken.

CISCO: Actually, there are a lot of similarities, nostalgia-wise, between this and "Centerfield" by John Fogerty.

EGBERT: True, Gene. There's Roy Acuff, Lefty Frizzell, Marty Robbins. There's a model of George Jones's old tour bus, a cardboard cut-out model that probably once came in a shredded wheat box. Now

George is signing the guitar. Gee, this reminds me of "Hillbilly Heaven." Remember that song?

CISCO: Yeah, that's where Hoppy and all the dead cowboys went, right?

EGBERT: No, that's where all the great dead hillbilly singers went.

CISCO: Who are they?

EGBERT: Uh... Hank Williams and... uh... they're too numerous to mention. Space will not permit...

CISCO: OK, Rog. This next video has a very beautiful girl in it.

EGBERT: She looks like she's right off the cover of *Country Vogue*.

CISCO: She has anguish in her face. She looks like she picked too much cotton and she's waiting for her man to get home. EGBERT: She's so sultry. If her man is smart he won't make her wait much longer. Ooop, here he comes, driving home in his hard hat.

CISCO: He looks like he just got off the rig.

EGBERT: Boy, is he glad to get home, and who could blame him?

CISCO: She's sexier than anything we've seen on MTV.

EGBERT: And they are actually kissing. Now we see him putting back a cold one and... oh God... it's John Denver!

CISCO: No!

EGBERT: It is! He's got contact lenses! It's funny, but I never realized that he looks

kind of like Roy Rogers.

CISCO: Now the girl is putting on makeup, and suddenly the picture is in color.

EGBERT: And John Denver is putting on evening clothes with a wing collar. I guess after a double shift on the oil rig you feel like changing clothes, dressing for dinner. She's wearing a Versace gown and \$20,000 diamond earrings. Now they're getting out of a Checker cab. The farm must be close to the city. He must be a potato farmer in the Hamptons, like Carl Yastremski. He's either a worker by day and capitalist by night, or the black-and-white gritty part is his youth and the color-high fashion part is his successful period some years later. Ooooh, look at the strands of saliva between the girl's teeth. That is really sexy! Could I be jealous of John Denver? Gene! What's happening? Do you think we'll be able to go back to MTV after this, after being down on the farm with farmhands from all the best modeling agencies? Wow, that was "Don't Close Your Eyes Tonight" by John Denver. What a lucky guy. If only for one video.

CISCO: Well, that's all for now. See you again at the videos.

Gene Cisco and Roger Egbert play horseshoes with Scott Cohen and Glenn O'Brien.



Phil Dent

IN SEARCH OF THE SPIRIT OF ROCK 'N' ROLL

Rock 'n' Roll: The Early Days
RCA-Columbia Pictures
Home Video

Rule of thumb: any song with the phrase "rock 'n' roll" in the title generally isn't. This rule is not infallible, of course, and I'm not sure it applies to videos (or magazine articles, for that matter). But one

would do well to keep in mind that the spirit of rock 'n' roll exists where you find it. It doesn't always come in the hippest, slickest packages or crop up on cue.

Part of the excitement of rock music in the '50s was the constant discovery of its diversity, which is well documented in *Rock 'n' Roll: The Early Days*. From Big Joe Turner, who—dignified but cookin' in suit and tie—reminds us that early rock was not solely the province of young turks, to the advent of such wimp-rockers as Fabian and Paul Anka, this video com-

plements the acclaimed TV special *Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll* in covering the golden period of 1952 to 1959.

Priceless moments include a clip from *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* of David Nelson unable to enjoy his classical music because crew-cut Ricky is having his brain cells rearranged by Big Mama Thornton's original "Hound Dog." On the obscure side is a wild video of the Treniers, a New York vocal group featuring four agile brothers (two of whom were twins).

Poor Pat Boone has his hit cover versions of "Ain't That a Shame" and "Tutti Frutti" painfully but hilariously contrasted to the originals by Fats Domino and Little Richard, respectively (Pat admits in an interview that he resisted doing "Tutti Frutti" because it "didn't make sense"). Then there's Steve Allen doing his straight-faced dramatic reading of the lyrics to Gene Vincent's "Be-Bop-a-Lula." Best of all is a backstage interlude showing a girl with her arms flung around Elvis Presley's neck. Elvis matter-of-factly picks up her hand, spots the wedding ring, shrugs, and puts her hand back on his shoulder.

But the greatest strength of *Rock 'n' Roll: The Early Days*—a script that takes pains to put the music in proper socio-political perspective—is also its greatest flaw. The writing lacks the vitality and flash of the music it celebrates, and actor John Heard's dry, monotone narration makes it seem more like a term paper than a rollicking rockumentary. Directors Patrick Montgomery and Pamela Page obviously put a lot of thought and effort into this project, but they serve up their delectable morsels of rock history like a juicy hamburger on a piece of dry toast. I hope that in their upcoming project, tentatively titled *Whole Lotta Shakin': The Roots of Rock 'n' Roll*, they remember the salsa.

Spike Jones

The Craziest Video on Earth
Best of Spike Jones Video

One guy who never lacked for pizzazz was Spike Jones, America's crown prince of musical comedy throughout the '40s and early '50s. Jones and his band of multitalented zanies took pop hits and classics and skewered them; no gag was too low, no sacred cow safe from their slapstick satire. A new video, proudly billed as *The Craziest Video on Earth*, gathers footage from several Spike Jones TV appearances and includes silly, sillier, and silliest versions of Rossini's William Tell Overture and McHugh-Fields's "I'm in the Mood for Love," as well as such Jones hits as "Holiday for Strings" and "Cocktails for Two." Some of the humor may seem dated (it is) or downright dumb (that too), but infectious good humor, manic energy, and high-caliber musicianship win the day. Rock 'n' roll was barely a gleam in Gladys Presley's eye when Spike Jones filmed these segments, but his irreverence and antisociability helped pave the way for rock's insurrection just as surely as did Louis Jordan's jump-jazz or Muddy Waters' electric blues. The spirit of rock 'n' roll can be found here.

—Gary Kenton

CALL HIM BURROUGHS

A few years ago Timothy Leary threw a party for William S. Burroughs at his Laurel Canyon home in Los Angeles. At one point during the evening a guest beckoned a couple of us over to a prominently displayed white painting in the corner of the living room. Color-coordinated to the max, simple yet vapid, the blank art matched the Leary's clothing and furniture. Pointing at the painting, the mischievous guest suggested we give it a poke—still wet. Well.

Somewhere around midnight, as the festivities waned, an intoxicated journalist goaded the party's stoned guest of honor into an argument about gun control. The starch fairly flew off Burroughs's Brooks Brothers suit as he was led angrily out the front door by his secretary and John Giorno, ranting all the while. It occurred to me that a writer's celebrity might be gauged by the ease with which one is able to press his intellectual/emotional buttons. But Burroughs, of course, is nowhere that simple, even if he does tend to come off on your hands sometimes.

Those who haven't made the acquaintance of Bill Lee, Dr. Benway, or any other alter egos of Burroughs, the 71-year-old grand lizard of the twentieth century's darkest aesthetics, you could do worse than to pick up the newly released video version of Howard Brookner's documentary, ominously titled *Burroughs*, as well as Burroughs's newly discovered first novel. There's this carefully self-structured myth about Burroughs, you see, that begins somewhere in the 1950s, when he, Jack Kerouac, Neil Cassady, Allen Ginsberg, Norman Mailer, and a subsidiary cadre of beats took too close a look at postnuclear Western civilization's moral hit parade, forever changing the way people felt about drugs, sex, and ethics. Junkies, queers, and hipsters temporarily ruled the world, hippies and punks would follow, and now everyone has to look over his shoulder on occasion.

But snuggle up a little closer and meet the scribe himself—safely, vicariously.

"My whole life has been resistance to 'the ugly spirit,'" confesses the author of *Junkie*, *Naked Lunch*, *The Ticket That Exploded*, *The Place of Dead Roads*, and 17 or so other books. Brookner, who began the film in 1978 while still a film student and finished it four years later, has captured the entire trajectory of the writer's life, from his early cut-up experiments with writer Bryon Gysin in London to his most recent novels, which radically reimagine his midwestern childhood in Wild West form.

"It was really hard to film him," the 30-year-old director (who recently completed another documentary, *A Minute in the Life of Robert Wilson*) admitted to me. "He can be very outgoing, but he can also have this . . . it's not a wall, it's more of a two-way mirror, where you're either looking at him and he's looking inward or he's looking at you and there's no back and forth. It took a long time to break through that, especially with a camera.

"When I began filming him he had moved to Colorado, but as soon as we got there I just didn't feel comfortable. Yet a lot of the best footage I have comes

from this uncomfortable time. The first thing he ever said when I turned on the camera is toward the end of the film, when he says, 'I demand a gay state'—as if he were talking to a TV reporter who'd just come to his apartment—and I want us to be as tough as the Israelis. Anybody who fucks around with us anywhere, we're gonna be there with our machine guns.' I realized then that it was going to be a lively film." To put it mildly.

An intense exploration of a particularly gnarly soul, *Burroughs* defies any attempt at a brief synopsis. Visits with former family gardener Otto Belue, Burroughs's older brother Mortimer, writer Terry Southern, and Burroughs's late son Billy Jr. are all tinged with distance and a good measure of raw pain. In other interviews, Herbert Huncke, a character in *Junkie*, talks about getting him high on morphine for the first time, while Allen Ginsberg ponders Burroughs's marriage to Joan Adams, which ended one drunken evening in Mexico when Burroughs missed the glass placed on her head during their ever-popular William Tell routine, killing her (which might account for his intense subsequent interest in improving his marksmanship).

So, now that you've seen the video, why not read the (first) book? This month the Viking Press will publish *Queer*, which Burroughs wrote in 1951, before *Junkie*, which until now was regarded as his first work. The *Queer* manuscript was recently acquired from a private collector.

In his new preface to a work he obviously finds at least embarrassing if not keenly painful, Burroughs writes, "I am forced to the appalling conclusion that I would never have become a writer but for Joan's death, and to a realization of the extent to which this event has motivated and formulated my writing. I live with the constant threat of possession and a constant need to escape from possession, from Control. So the death of Joan brought me in contact with the invader, the Ugly Spirit, and maneuvered me into a lifelong struggle, in which I have had no choice except to write my way out."

Almost only a fragment of a novel, *Queer* was apparently written while Burroughs was suffering heroin withdrawal symptoms. Paranoia permeates the book, which describes his alter ego Bill Lee's pursuit of Eugene Allerton in Mexico City in the 1940s. A fairly straight narrative, it leaves Lee and Allerton stranded somewhere in search of yage in South America. (For a less lurid treatment of Burroughs's escapades tracking down what he hoped would be a telepathic prescription, check out his *Yage Letters to Allen Ginsberg*.)

"*Queer* is a wonderful novel," poet John Giorno told me. A friend of Burroughs's since 1964, when Burroughs "came back to America after all those years," Giorno has a privileged vantage point on him, since the two live and work together in the same building on New York City's Bowery. "William hates *Queer*," says Giorno, "because it's a completely subjective confessional narrative. But it reads like an early self-portrait, like one of Rembrandt's self-portraits as a young

man. There are all sorts of personal blemishes in there, but it reads like William talks—with the same style of voice he has now." (That voice: crepuscular, slyly comedic, somewhat creepy.)

The best moment in *Queer*, other than the awkwardly revealing introduction, is the first appearance of the grotesquely comic "routines" he uses to insinuate himself to Allerton. These comedic turns gradually came to permeate the novels that followed *Naked Lunch*: *The Ticket That Exploded*, *The Soft Machine*, and *Nova Express*. Stories about Arabian chess matches and oilmen gradually evolved into algebraic schemata involving cosmic power brokers and vicious lawmen, while dingy phallic centipedes in outer space, control fantasies, and gaseous violent visions make him the hippest magickal father to come down the pike since Aleister Crowley. (Director David Cronenberg, somewhat of a creeperoid in his own art, has recently been scouting locations with Burroughs in Tangiers for a film version of *Naked Lunch*. This match-up has fans of both artists drooling with anticipation.)

As symbolic daddy to a new generation of industrial artists—such as Throbbing Gristle, Psychic TV, SPK, Johanna Went, Z'ev, Cabaret Voltaire, and Survival Research Laboratories—Burroughs has been successful. The most difficult moment in *Burroughs*, however, arrives when his son Billy visits him and his secretary, James Grauerholtz, in the Bunker (the former YMCA locker room in Manhattan Burroughs calls home). In the film John Giorno speculates on why Billy, himself a fairly talented writer (he suffered through his own version of *Junkie*, titled *Speed*, and composed the blackly humorous novel *Kentucky Ham*) comes off as so pathetic and sadly distant from his father. When I mentioned my own discomfort during this segment, Giorno reiterated:

"Life was very difficult for Billy. I have this theory that he sort of personified the archetype of the kid who listened to all of the beats, *On the Road* and whatnot. Except the beats, like Ginsberg and Burroughs, went on to become infinitely famous, which produced money for them, and they were stroked by the comforts of the world. But Billy was an ordinary American kid who was on the road with nothing."

Lately I feel more than ever that the painting of William S. Burroughs is still wet. Touch him and he's likely to explode all over you, because his battle with the Ugly Spirit tells us so much about our own. Dark literary characters are rarely so highly regarded (Edgar Allan Poe is the obvious exception), and it's likely that only time will explain his odd allure for a couple generations of readers. Those unfamiliar with Burroughs, needless to say, owe it to themselves to plunge into this long-gone daddy's nightmares as soon as possible, and they should check out Brookner's *Burroughs* as well. Both the artist and his works are important icons of this postindustrial Babylon.

—Richard Gehr



GLORY DAYS

At the old Colonial Inn in Miami,
mob guys were gentlemen
of leisure who dressed sharp,
read their names in
the society columns, dated socialites,
and did "business" with taste and style.
Oh, for the old days.



Spud Schwartz

Article by Harold Conrad

Here are you, Jimmy Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, George Raft, and Edward G.? I have just received the lists of federal indictments of New York's Mafia leaders. The bundle is eight inches high and weighs about 10 pounds, and the stuff in it could have kept you guys busy with gangster screenplays for another five years.

Produced by the ambitious, 42-year-old Rudolph Giuliani, U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, the court drama will unfold early next year with the gangsters playing themselves. It's one hell of a cast. *Prizzi's Honor*, *The Godfather*, and *The Untouchables* come to life. A federal grand jury has indicted the entire leadership of New York's powerful mob families.

This flesh-and-blood movie has everything. A mighty task force—made up of the FBI, the Joint Organized Crime Task Force of the New York City police, and several other law enforcement bodies—mobilizes to bring about the indictments. There are murders, Sicilian intrigue, wiretaps, and "stings."

You like action stuff? The charges include trafficking in heroin, extortion in the restaurant and construction businesses, embezzlement of labor union funds, mob control of labor unions, multimillion-dollar thefts, illegal gambling, loan sharking, and bribery, topped off with 25 murders.

The mob ought to know what time it is. They stole \$2,236,885 worth of watches from the Arnex Watch Company in Carlstadt, New Jersey. Their taste in art isn't bad. They ripped off \$700,000 worth of rare oriental art objects from the Robert Ellsworth gallery on



AP/Wide World Photos



New York's East Side. And they'll have no problem watching the Mets on TV. They hijacked a truckload of *Crazy Eddie's* television sets.

There's this guy Charles McDonnell, who, according to the indictment, borrowed \$15,000 from one of the Family loan sharks at 300 percent interest, or \$450 a week. When he couldn't keep up the payments, they made him sell his house and took \$29,000 from the proceeds.

Arlyne Brickaman borrowed \$24,500 from another Family loan shark, according to the indictment. The interest payments were greater than the loan, so she quit paying. She was told she now owed \$94,000 and to "pay up or else." "Or else" is not very good for the complexion.

Who are these guys who run New York like it was their own private fiefdom? They are a shady army of

When Buscetta talked to the cops, the mob knocked off his son-in-law. He sang again, and this time they knocked off his two sons, a nephew, and another son-in-law.

bosses, capos, and foot soldiers making up the five Mafia families in New York, where the Mafia muscle is concentrated. The boss of bosses is "Big Paul" Castellano, head of the Gambino family. The other family heads are "Fat Tony" Salerno, of the Genovese family, "Tony Ducks" Corallo, of the Lucchese family, Philip "Rusty" Rastelli, of the Bonanno family, and Gennaro "Gerry Lang" Langello, of the Colombo family.

Roy Cohn, the powerful, serpent-tongued barrister, is defending Castellano. I ask him to tell me about the 60-year-old underworld boss.

"He's a quiet guy, lives in a nice house in Staten Island, sends his kids to good schools, and doesn't bother anybody," says Cohn.

There is a 51-count indictment against this quiet guy who doesn't bother anybody, including theft, loan sharking, drug trafficking, and murder.

Even his enemies, and he has a lot of them, say Roy Cohn is one hell of a lawyer. "These indictments, they're ridiculous. Giuliani has to make them stick. Some of them go back 50 years! I hear a lot of big talk from Giuliani. He has to get these guys to trial, and so far his track record for getting cases to trial is not very good."

Cohn has been in the headlines for the past 32 years, dating back to the days when he was counsel for Senator Joe McCarthy, the wild nut from Wisconsin who made McCarthyism a household word. A Harvard Law School graduate, the son of one of New York State's most respected judges, Cohn has enjoyed a fabulous career as a barrister. His list of clients covers a wide spectrum, from Adnan Khashoggi, the world's richest man, to Paul Castellano, the Mafia's boss of bosses, and somewhere in between are several disgruntled ex-wives who became very rich divorcees.

Rudy Giuliani grew up in Brooklyn, an altar-boy type whose father owned a bar and grill. At one time he considered entering the priesthood, but instead he attended Manhattan College and New York University, then went to work in the U.S. attorney's office in 1970. By the time he was 30, he had become the office's third-ranking prosecutor. He took off from there and was a made-to-order bird dog for the attorney general. When he asks Washington for something, he gets it.

Giuliani is no shrinking violet. He's been taking his share of bows, and more, lately. He's skillful at running press conferences, which he seems to call every time he has a case. Gerald Stern, administrator of the State of New York Commission of Judicial Conduct, called Giuliani's handling of the press conferences announcing the Mafia indictments a disgrace.

Cohn says Giuliani is trying to build a political career off his press clippings. A bit of *déjà vu* here. It was almost 50 years ago that Thomas Dewey, special New York prosecutor, busted the infamous "Lucky" Luciano, one of the "untouchables," and sent him to jail for 35 to 50 years. He went on to a successful political career that culminated in a nomination for president.

Regardless of the criticism of Giuliani, he has taken a running jump and landed right on the heart of the U.S. Mafia conspiracy. And though the mob has been taking it on the chin coast-to-coast—U.S. attorneys have been busting Mafia cases all over the country; shock waves are reverberating in Boston, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City, St. Louis, and Los Angeles—all we hear about is Rudy Giuliani. That's a talent, the stuff successful politicians are made of.



They're blowing this whole thing out of proportion," says Roy Cohn. "The public doesn't give a damn about gangsters. They're a lot more worried about terrorists and communists."

I, for one, give a damn. When you squawk about paying \$7.50 for a five-shrimp cocktail, you don't realize that the restaurant is kicking back a piece of the profits to the mob every month. The Cafe Ziegfeld, on West 45th Street in New York, had to shell out \$25,000 a year plus \$2,000 a month. Ciro's was in for \$25,000 a year, and even the swank Sherry-Netherland Hotel was getting nicked for \$7,500 a year. It's pure extortion: if they don't pay, they have union trouble.

The mob infests the construction business like a horde of termites, and while its bite is hidden in the costs, it affects the price of real estate. It starts from below the ground, with the cement pouring, and on up. The mob

has been extorting millions from cement companies. Why do the builders pay? Union trouble can lead to delays that can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. And you know who controls the unions.

The case in New York begins with a scene right out of *The Untouchables*. While a 1982 Jaguar is parked near a Long Island restaurant, detectives of the New York State Organized Crime Task Force plant a tiny radio transmitter behind the dashboard. The car belongs to the chauffeur of Tony Corallo, the Lucchese family racket boss.

Bingo! It starts paying off a half hour after the bug is planted. Corallo talks freely to his trusted chauffeur and

Opposite center, "Big Paul" Castellano, the boss of all bosses, a quiet, family guy from Staten Island; opposite right, "Fat Tony" Salerno; above, playboy Joe Adams.

other top mobsters as he drives around the city. Detectives trail in a van, recording the conversations.

The cops hit the jackpot. In five months, they accumulated 75 hours of incriminating tapes, which were turned over to Rudy Giuliani. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies also had been busy in several other major cities, and soon there were cracks in the once impregnable shell of the Mafia. *Omerta*, the iron-clad "code of silence" of the Brotherhood, was being broken. There were canaries singing in Mafia strongholds, fattening the FBI portfolio with damaging evidence. The aging top mafiosi invoked the old Sicilian code, and cops began finding dead "canaries" all over the place.

Tommaso Buscetta must be the canary of the century. The ex-Mafia capo, a Sicilian import, is being held under tight security in a New Jersey jail, for he is a star witness. Arrested for heroin trafficking when the anti-Mafia sweep started in Sicily, Buscetta sang a few short arias to the Italian authorities. For breaking the code, the Mafia knocked off his son-in-law, which upset Buscetta's wife, who bent his ear. He sang again. This time, the mob knocked off his two sons, a nephew, and another son-in-law.



Culver Pictures

Despondent over the murders of his innocent relatives, Buscetta began singing fortissimo, and his testimony led to the arrests of 366 mafiosi, the largest crackdown in the mob's 159-year history. Among the names Buscetta dropped were those of several members of the Brotherhood now under indictment in this country.

Panic is setting in as the indictments pile up; an FBI agent confides to me that there will be a lot more dead canaries around before the trials. Dozens have already been killed in New York and Chicago.

But there is an owl among the canaries, a wise old owl, and owls don't sing. Giuliani flew to Tuscon to question the ailing 80-year-old Joe Bonanno to get him to admit to when he became a member of the Mafia Commission.

Bonanno repeatedly refused to answer the question. His alibi: "My doctors instructed me and recommended me not to testify because the extreme stress

could be fatal." But the government wasn't buying his cop-out, and he was carted off to prison, heart pills and all, where he will stay until the trial begins.

Fifty years ago feuding families were usurping power, edging onto each other's turf, and *terra bruciata* (scorched earth), another Sicilian code, was invoked, calling for the elimination of entire families of brothers who broke the code.

Then the revolution began. Charles "Lucky" Luciano, a ruthless but shrewd mobster, had worked his way up to become boss of bosses of the Mafia. Lucky had big ambitions, and while he was a Sicilian, he believed that the old Sicilian code had no place in this country and that its archaic rules stood in the way of big business.

He called a national meeting of the old bosses, the "Moustache Petes," most of whom were Sicilians to whom the old Mafia code was religion, and laid out his plan. No. 1: there would be no more killings. The murder of any member would have to be sanctioned by a commission. He spoke like a corporate executive instead of a mafioso and punched holes in the Sicilian code.

The Moustaches rebelled. A week later, 27 of them in key cities around the country were murdered. From then on no one fooled around with Lucky Luciano. He set up a power base with his own people, two of whom were Jewish—Meyer Lansky and Bugsy Siegel—a violent departure from Mafia principles.

Out of this setup the National Crime Syndicate was born. Frank Costello was Lucky's right-hand man, and Joe Adonis, a Luciano lieutenant from Brooklyn, was named as the emissary between the Mafia and the Syndicate, which would do the "big" thinking and national planning and offer the families its protection.

There is an old axiom that says, "Those who make too much of history wallow in it." I'm going to wallow because this seems like the perfect time to look back at the old Syndicate mobsters, some of whom I knew.

Through a curious turn I got to meet some of the stars of the underworld while working as a sportswriter, covering boxing mostly, the mob's favorite sport.

One night I walk into the famous, original Lindy's on Broadway. It is about 3 AM and the joint is jumping. There's not a table to be had. Broadway ran 24 hours, full blast, in those days. Seated near the door I see George Wood, a good friend and a top agent for William Morris who books all the star talent for the mob's nightclub circuit. He catches my eye and motions for me to sit with him and his guest, another man.

"I want you to meet Joe Adonis," he says. I know all about Joe A., as he is called. He's a top man in the Syndicate and he owns many things, Brooklyn among others, where he keeps several politicians, judges, and cops well fed and well heeled. He's a big fight fan and knows my name from my byline in the newspaper.

I find Adonis an interesting study. His threads are impeccable but on the conservative side. He's a good-looking man and has that debonair facade Hollywood gives movie gangsters.

I hear Wood and Adonis talking about this fabulous nightclub and gambling casino the mob is opening in Hallandale, Florida, about 20 miles north of Miami in Broward County, where the Syndicate can operate freely.

Wood says to Adonis, "You know, Joe, you could use a guy like Harold down there. He knows all the newspapermen and a lot of people in show business. He'd be good for public relations."

Adonis sizes me up for a few seconds. "It's OK with me," he says, "if he's interested." Then he gets up, says goodnight, and leaves. When we're alone I say to Wood, "What the hell are you getting me into? I could get loused up working for those guys."

"You kidding?" he says. "There will be over a hundred people working there, including stars like Milton Berle, Sophie Tucker, and Maurice Chevalier, to name a few. It's just for the winter season, 10 weeks. It's legit. Besides, you can get four times more a week than you're getting on the paper."

I'm having a drink at the bar when I spot a good-looking guy whose eyes I'll never forget. The eyes of a dead man. He is "Bugsy" Siegel. And for some reason he takes a liking to me.

Now he's got me hooked, the main reason being that my girl is working in the show. I have a month's vacation coming and I can add a leave of absence. I take the job. The next week I'm in Florida at the new place, the Colonial Inn. It has a vast showroom on one side and a plush gambling casino on the other, the prototype of what would soon be in Las Vegas, which is now just a funky little town on the edge of the Mojave desert.

My bosses at the Colonial are Frank Costello, known as the Prime Minister of the Underworld (those guys even had classier names), Meyer Lansky, and Joe A., but several other guys have a token piece of the casino, like "Dandy" Phil Kastel, Costello's partner from New Orleans, the Fischetti brothers from Chicago, Jimmy "Blue Eyes," whose eyes are brown, and Eddie McGrath, a power on the New York docks.

The whole scene is like a movie to me. I am fascinated by these mob guys. I see important politicians and big society names go dry-mouthed when they talk to them. I think I figured out the chemistry. The gangsters have an aura of menace that titillates these people whose biggest thrill in life has been breaking par or goosing their secretaries. It's like petting lions and tigers that are housebroken.

My first week at the Colonial, the car assigned to me goes on the bum and I have to take taxis while it is being repaired. I put in an expense account for 12 bucks for two trips to Hollywood, Florida, which is about 10 minutes away.

One afternoon, Lansky walks up to me. And he isn't smiling.

"Hey, you must be a big tipper or something," he says. "Two round trips to Hollywood is eight bucks. Four four-bit tips is two bucks. I make that 10 bucks." Then he walks off. The casino had a record take the night before, over a half-million. And that's when a half-million was a half-million.

Still, the Syndicate mobsters had a flair, a cavalier style that made them prototypes for the Hollywood gristmill and neverending subjects for fiction writers. They are a fey part of Americana.

While the current gangsters are drab, faceless people who keep to themselves, the Syndicate guys were always seeking acceptance, always out front at public events, grist for the gossip columns. Luciano lived and worked out of a plush suite at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel, and although he was registered under the name of Charley Ross, everyone knew who he was. And if the old mobsters were as greedy, they covered up their



AP/Wide World Photos



but they had too much at stake to risk fighting the Feds. This is something the current bums never learned.

Lucky Luciano was a star, the unchallenged leader of gangsterdom. His is a bizarre story. Dewey, the ambitious New York prosecutor who was at the same point in his life as Giuliani is now, had tried every legal avenue to put Luciano away and kept failing. Finally he nailed him on a prostitution rap after stashing several hookers—Cokey Flo, Silver-Tongued Annie, and Jenny the Factory—in the Hotel St. George in Brooklyn to testify against him. That was with room service.

Luciano was sent to Dannemora prison for 30 to 50 years. (Later two of the girls wanted to recant, but Luciano's appeal was unsuccessful.)

The Syndicate was just becoming a corporate success when Luciano was busted for a lousy, second-rate racket one of his underlings had started.

In the sixth year of his incarceration, World War II broke out. Nazi submarines were sinking our military convoys within a hundred miles of New York harbor. Navy intelligence was convinced that the Nazis were getting information on our convoy sailing schedules. The Mafia, which controlled the docks and the fishing

avarice with hefty charitable contributions.

So Luciano became a war hero while he was sitting in the can. At the end of the war, his sentence was commuted and he was deported to Italy. And who advised the judge who commuted the sentence? None other than the same Thomas Dewey who had sent Luciano up for 30 to 50 and was now governor.

The syndicate became an important entity. It controlled the race wires and gambling from coast-to-coast and the major casinos from Canada to the Caribbean, as well as several legitimate businesses.

"We're bigger than U.S. Steel," said Meyer Lansky.

One night at the Colonial Inn bar I'm having drinks with some of the girls between shows when I spot a good-looking guy a few tables away. I know who he is, but this is the first time I see him face-to-face. I'll never forget his eyes. They are pale blue and expressionless, the eyes of a dead man. He is "Bugsy" Siegel, another star in this infamous cast. He hates the name Bugsy, which was laid on him when he was a cold, ruthless young killer on New York's Lower East Side. His name is Ben and his friends call him Benny. Anybody who calls him Bugsy is taking his life in his hands.

Siegel had made several important hits for Luciano in his younger days and recently had been accused of snuffing one "Big Greenie" Greenberg, a Vegas mob partner, but beat the rap in a controversial case in Hollywood. After the Syndicate was formed he was sent west to take over California, and he planted himself right in the middle of fashionable Beverly Hills, where he became a celebrity of sorts. Among his regular dates were the Countess Di Frasso and several well-known actresses.

They had a sophistication and know-how lacking in the current bunch. The first thing they did was to create a power base by taking over Tammany Hall, the powerful political club that once ruled New York. They had similar power bases in Chicago, Miami, New Orleans, and other cities, where they had a piece of everyone from mayors and judges to the cops on the beat, which provided a safety net for their operations.

They also had a hard-and-fast rule against dealing in narcotics—but not for any moral reasons, as Brando, a.k.a. Don Corleone, explained in *The Godfather*. That was bullshit. They didn't deal in narcotics because it was a federal offense and they didn't want the Feds on their ass. They could handle the local laws in the cities,

Actor George Raft, opposite left, set the style for the real gangsters; opposite right, Rudy Giuliani, the prosecutor running for President?; above, "Bugsy" Siegel, who hated to be called Bugsy; above right, "Tony Ducks" Corallo, who had a bug up his ass.



fleets, was suspect, but Navy intelligence couldn't infiltrate it.

As a last resort the Navy went to see Frank Costello, who had succeeded Luciano as boss of bosses. He told the chief of intelligence that some of the Moustache Petes, all Sicilians, were still loyal to their mother country, an ally of the Nazis, and could be the culprits, but he couldn't be of any help because he was not a Sicilian. "Only one man's word is law to the Mafia, and he could turn this thing around," he said, "but that guy is in jail, doing 35 to 50."

Costello and Lansky went up to Dannemora and laid the case before Luciano. He agreed to cooperate. Two months after he put out the word, convoy losses were cut 80 percent.

For some unknown reason Bugsy takes a shine to me and he tells me about the big hotel he is building in Las Vegas. "I could use a guy like you," he says. "That place is going to become the gambling capital of the

world."

I tell him that I'm a writer and that this isn't my racket.

"How would you like to go to Hollywood and be a movie writer?" he says. "I got a lot of juice out there. Some of them studio heads are pals of mine, and I can always get a favor from them."

I conjure up a picture of me carrying my typewriter out to Hollywood and saying, "Bugsy sent me."

Bugsy dressed like a movie star, namely George Raft. He and Raft were close friends. Although Raft was a straight guy and a pussycat, he never forgot that when he was only a dancer in some of the mob's crummier night spots, it was "the boys" who sent him out to the coast and got him a screen test.

A series of gangster movie roles catapulted him to stardom, and he was making \$10,000 a week when taxes were low, which would be the equivalent of about \$60,000 a week today.

The mob idolized George. He was their hero. They all went to his shirtmaker and his tailor; they even adopted his mannerisms, including his coin-flipping. The critics marveled over how beautifully Raft portrayed gangsters, never realizing that it was the gangsters who were portraying him.

One night, I'm sitting in the Friar's Club in New York with comedian Joe E. Lewis, who's waiting for Raft. He tells me a story about the actor, and I laugh in disbelief when he gives me the punch line, because it sounds like movie stuff. Finally, Raft comes in and Lewis prods him into telling this story. "I had made four gangster pictures in a row. My fifth picture was a switch on the usual role. I go on the road to plug the new movies and when I'm in Chicago I go to the Chez Paree, which 'the boys' own."

"Two guys I know come up to me, and they look mad. One guy says, 'That was a real fink thing you did, George.' The other guy says, 'Yeah, how could you do a thing like that to us?'

"I didn't know what the hell they were talking about. What did I do?" I ask.

"What did you do?" says the first guy. "You played a fucking detective in your new movie!"

All in all, my Florida sojourn was a fascinating episode, allowing me to watch mob guys operate from their side of the fence. They're calculating and ruthless when it comes to business, but when the heat is off, they're like the fun-loving bunch that used to hang out on neighborhood street corners and think "hot foots" were hilarious. But I never let myself forget that all of them have notches on their guns if you check back far enough in their careers.

They tried hard to be gentlemen, but it didn't always work out that way. One night I'm in the lounge at the Colonial and some guy walks up to Bugsy and says, "Hey, you're Bugsy Siegel, aren't you?"

Bugsy whacks him across the nose a couple of times and the guy goes down, bleeding. Then Bugsy kicks him twice in the ribs with his pointed, George Raft-style elevated shoes, leans over him, and says quietly, "The name is Ben, B-e-n. Mister Ben Siegel to you."

Frank Costello, who's standing next to me at the bar, turns and says wryly, "That's very bad manners. He never should have kicked him."

The code was invoked against Bugsy soon after I left the inn when they caught him stealing from the Las Vegas venture. One quiet night in Beverly Hills he was killed by a shotgun blast as he sat reading the newspaper in his living room.

The death of Meyer Lansky in 1981 was the symbolic end of that era.

But evil is evil in any era and neither Ed Meese, nor Rudolph Giuliani, nor the Pope is going to do away with it. Despite what Roy Cohn says—and he is prejudiced—the betting is that Giuliani has enough air-tight evidence to get these new guys to trial, and if they are convicted, they will be forgotten quickly, these guys who rub one another out while eating pasta in little spaghetti joints or taking the sun in their backyards. There won't be any plaques in the gangster hall of fame for them, nor will any movie stars portray them.

They're no fun at all.

join in with the basic pulses, then subdivide into the rhythmic patterns I often use."

The most striking thing about *The Desert Music* is that Reich hasn't simply copied the sound of his smaller ensemble works or "mellowed out." He's put together a five-part work that instead of rushing along at breakneck speed covers a wide range of moods, with the lyrical sections acting as a foil to the more energetic parts.

Despite his success in the concert hall, Reich still works in smaller forms. He wrote *Vermont Counterpoint* for the popular flutist Ransom Wilson. The work calls for eleven flutes, either live or on tape and Wilson's recording of it was a classical best-seller. Reich recently wrote a similar work titled *New York Counterpoint* for the equally renowned clarinetist Richard Stoltzman. "Two of the three parts were written in Vermont," he admits, "but I started it in New York. Its character is more aggressive, since it uses clarinets, so in my imagination at least it's more New Yorkish."

Although Reich has been a prominent figure in New York's music scene, he now finds it easier to compose in Vermont. "I still live mostly in New York," he says, "but things tend to build up there and stay with you longer. If I do an interview in New York, even

after it's done it seems to linger somehow. Here I can go right back to work." Did Reich go right back to work after we spoke? For the St. Louis Symphony's sake, I hope so. "I really have to have this piece done by October," he sighs, "because I obviously won't have the time to do it then."

FURTHER LISTENING

Sangkala!

E. Koestyara and Group Gapura
Icon Records

When most people think of Indonesian music—and face it, what else is on our minds these days?—they think of gamelans, the large percussion orchestras. Many Western musicians, Steve Reich among them, have been heavily influenced by the gamelan sound. *Sangkala!*, one of the catchiest, most infectious albums you'll ever hear, features the more pop-oriented *degung* style, using a small group of percussionists and a flute.

Group Gapura, an all-star lineup of Sundanese musicians from the western region of the island of Java, is a percussion-based ensemble that unwinds the popular *Sangkala* rhythm with a glowing, metallic inevitability. The real focus, though, is flutist S. Burhan, whose style when he plays his delicate,

highly ornate solos on the *suling* flute is oddly reminiscent of violinist Stephane Grappelli and guitarist Robert Fripp.

Indonesia isn't Mars. Its pop charts may be full of Michael Jacksons and Princes, but this record sold more than 100,000 copies, making it one of Indonesia's most popular records ever. With its copious liner notes, striking cover, and first-class German pressing, *Sangkala!* is a complete delight.

—John Schaefer

Etosha—Private Music in the Land of Dry Water

On the Future of Aviation
Ancient Dreams
Piano One
Various Artists
Private Music

Does Eno's obsolescent ambience make you nervous? Or are you simply sick of the Windham Hill sound? Let's graduate together to another level of slick soundtrack music for those quiet moments when little other than a cigar, a cognac, and a copy of the latest Martin Amis novel will suffice. You know, private music for private ears. Each of four new Private Music releases (220 E. 23rd St., New York, NY 10010) is available as either cassette tape or compact disc, and there's a video too—so crank up that home entertainment

center and merge.

The most ambient of the four releases comes from computer musician Sanford Ponder, whose *Etosha—Private Music in the Land of Dry Water* samples sounds found in nature and electronically relays them. The operative word here is "mellow."

But wait—with *On the Future of Aviation*, Jerry Goodman assembles a dramatic synthesis that recalls his past work as electric violinist for the Flock and Mahavishnu Orchestra. This is reading music that verily swings. Light and pleasantly bombastic at the same time.

The most interesting textures hereabouts are found on Patrick O'Hearn's *Ancient Dreams*. The former Frank Zappa bassist teams up with Tangerine Dream member Peter Baumann, who produced this album, to create a diverse, mysterious geography of noodling moments. Just the thing for long car rides, I would think.

Finally, *Piano One* features the combined solo piano threats of Yellow Magic Orchestra's Ryuichi Sakamoto, Eddie Jobson (Zappa, Roxy Music), Joachim Kuhn, and Eric Watson. Unfortunately, we seem to be back in Windham Hill territory here, so best to turn out the lights, set the alarm, and say goodnight.

—Richard Gehr



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TOM WAITS FOR NO MAN

How to act. How to watch Mr. Rogers. How to pick a road manager. How to live in the big city. And more solid information.

Interview by Glenn O'Brien

Photography by George DuBois

Tom Waits has a voice that could guide ships through dense fog. He sings songs that are poetic, hilarious, scary, touching, hallucinatory, and fine. Maybe he's like John Lee Hooker, Mose Allison, Neville Brand, Francois Villon, Soren Kierkegaard, Lenny Bruce, and Wallace Beery rolled into one. Sometimes his band sounds like a Salvation Army combo covering a Stones tune. But nothing really sounds like Waits. Or writes like. Or looks like. Or talks like.

His new album, *Rain Dogs* (on Island Records), is his tenth. His songs have also been done by the Eagles, Bette Midler, Jerry Jeff Walker, Lee Hazlewood, Dion, Richie Havens, Manhattan Transfer, Martin Mull, and Barbi Benton. His score for Francis Ford Coppola's *One From the Heart* was nominated for an Oscar. He has also acted in Coppola's films: *The Outsiders*, *Rumblefish* (pool hall owner), and *Cotton Club* (club manager Herman Stark.) In the next year he will star in films directed by Jim Jarmusch and Robert Frank, and, he hopes, bring the musical play he's been working on for a couple of years now to Broadway.

What's happening with your musical?
It's going to be done in Chicago in the late spring by the Steppenwolf Company, which did *Balm in Gilead* and *Orpheus*. Terry Kinney is going to direct it. He's in *Orpheus*. It's called *Frank's Wild Years*.

That was a song on your Swordfishtrombone album. Are you using songs from that album?

It's going to be all new, written just for the show.

Are you in it?
Yeah, I'm Frank. I never acted on stage before. I'm studying for it.

What do you have to learn?
I just have to learn honest, truthful behavior, that's all.

How do you learn that?
Just from practice, like anything else. It's kind of early on in the production now. We're going to have a reading of it in a few weeks. We'll find out what sticks to the wall and what doesn't. I'd like it to be as unconventional as possible and still have some focus and structure and credibility. It's going to be stylized. I don't think I've ever seen a musical that I've liked, really.

Did you write the book?
I wrote it with Kathleen Brennan.

How did you collaborate?
With great difficulty.

Did you work together or did you send stuff back and forth?
Well, she's my wife. We sent stuff back and forth. Like dishes, books, frying pans, vases.

Does it start out like the song, with Frank burning his house down?
It actually starts out with Frank at the end of his rope, despondent, penniless, on a park bench in East St. Louis in a snowstorm, having a going-out-of-business sale on the whole last ten years



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of his life. Like the guys around here on Houston Street with a little towel on the sidewalk, some books, some silverware, a radio that doesn't work, maybe a Julie London album. Then he falls asleep and dreams his way back home. I've been saying that it's a cross between *Eraserhead* and it's a *Wonderful Life*.

Ever work with your wife before?
No, this is a first. And a last.

Do you think it's hard to be critical with somebody that you're close to?
Yeah. Or it's hard not to be critical.

So, what's your day like?
Well, lately it's been a little easier. I get up at about 7 o'clock with the baby and I get the Rice Krispies going and the french toast, then I put on Mr. Rogers.

How old is the baby?
Two.

Does the baby watch Mr. Rogers or do you?
I watch it and I make her watch it with me. I do subtitles. I do a Fourteenth Street version of Mr. Rogers."

Neighborhood where everybody's out of work and selling drugs on the corner. When I was a kid the show was *Sheriff John*. He was a policeman. That's who I was forced to get to know.

In New York we had Officer Joe Bolton, an Irish cop; he was the host of the Three Stooges show, which, I guess, was supposed to keep a lid on the knucklehead behavior. What's your baby's name?

Well, we haven't picked a name yet. I told her that when she's 18 she can pick any name she wants. In the meantime, we'll call her something different every day.

What is she today?
Max today. She's been everything. We just can't seem to make up our minds. When she meets somebody and likes them she takes their name. She speaks 17 languages. She's now in military school in Connecticut. I only get to see her on weekends. At night when I get home all the kids line up in their uniforms and Joe Bob's got my martini and Max has my slippers and Roosevelt has my pipe. They all say "Hello, Daddy!"

So what happens after Mr. Rogers?
Well, I usually go to sleep under the table somewhere. Every day is different. I go over to the seminary on Tenth Avenue a lot. For a couple of hours. Just to relax. It reminds me of Illinois. I've been doing the record for months, so I just got a break. I was getting two or three hours of sleep for a couple of months.

Did you record in the daytime?
Yeah, from about 10 in the morning, I was working in midtown. I had to fight all the traffic and all the other commuters. The hardest thing was just getting to the studio. After that I was alright.

This album has really a lot of songs on it.
Nineteen. Everybody says that's too many.

Did you record others that didn't make it on the record?

Yeah, I did about 25 all together. There's a religious song that didn't get on the album. It's called "Bethlehem, Pa." It's about a guy named Bob Christ. There were a couple of others.

What happens to those?
They're orphans. They're on their own.

I'm really interested in the songs that don't make it onto albums.

I end up dismantling them. It's just like having a car that doesn't run. You just use it for parts. "The rest of the guys are gonna have to go out there now and bring Dad home some money. So all of you guys go out there and stick together. Bob, you look out for your younger brother there. And all of you go out there into the world of radio and performance value." I feel like Fagin.

It took a long time to record this album, two and a half months. The recording process has a peak, and then it dissipates. You have to be careful that it doesn't go on too long. Then you start to unravel everything. Nowadays, if you want a certain sound you don't have to get it now, you can get it later. When you're mixing, electronically. I wanted to get it now, so I felt like I cooked it and I ate it. You can establish percussion sounds later electronically. But I ended up banging on things so I felt that it really responded. If I couldn't get the right sound out of the drum set we'd get a chest of drawers in the bathroom and hit it real hard with a two-by-four. Things like that. That's on "Singapore." Those little things made me feel more involved than sampling on a synthesizer.

How did you wind up getting Keith Richards to play on this album?
I had this thing I used to say. This sound, I didn't know how to identify it, and I used to say, "That Keith Richards-type style thing." So instead of learning how to explain what I meant, I heard he was coming to New York, and it worked out.

Now you're going on tour. Do you pick

your tour band just on musicianship or do you try to pick people who are easy to get along with?

In a way, I pick people who are easy to get along with. I just have the road manager make announcements.

"Whatever you do, don't go to Tom with all of your problems. If you have problems with girlfriends, if you have problems with your instruments or travel plans, please see the road manager. Do not approach Tom with any personal problems! I repeat: do not approach Tom with any personal problems!" I'm best when I don't get involved. "Do not discuss salary with Tom!" it's going to be good.

Do you ever listen to music?

It's hard for me to sit down and just do that. I like it best when I hear it coming through the wall in a hotel room. I like it best on a bad speaker from a block away.

I find that if I go for a long time without listening to any music, I become vulnerable to what I hear. Like, I'll go around for a whole day whistling "This Bud's for you..."

Yeah, you really have to watch your musical diet, especially when you're trying to write something. A couple of years ago on my wife's birthday we heard a song called "Jesus' Blood Never Fails," and it stayed in my head for so long.

Have you ever been asked to do a commercial?

A couple. They wanted me for American Airlines. But we couldn't get the money up. A recreational vehicle company wanted me to do an ad for them. I've had offers for beer commercials.

I could have sworn I saw Robert Gordon in a Budweiser commercial.
Yeah, that was him.

Dr. John does that toilet paper commercial.

Yeah, "Roll all night long." He also does a cookie commercial.

Springsteen turned down \$12 million to appear in a Chrysler commercial for three seconds.

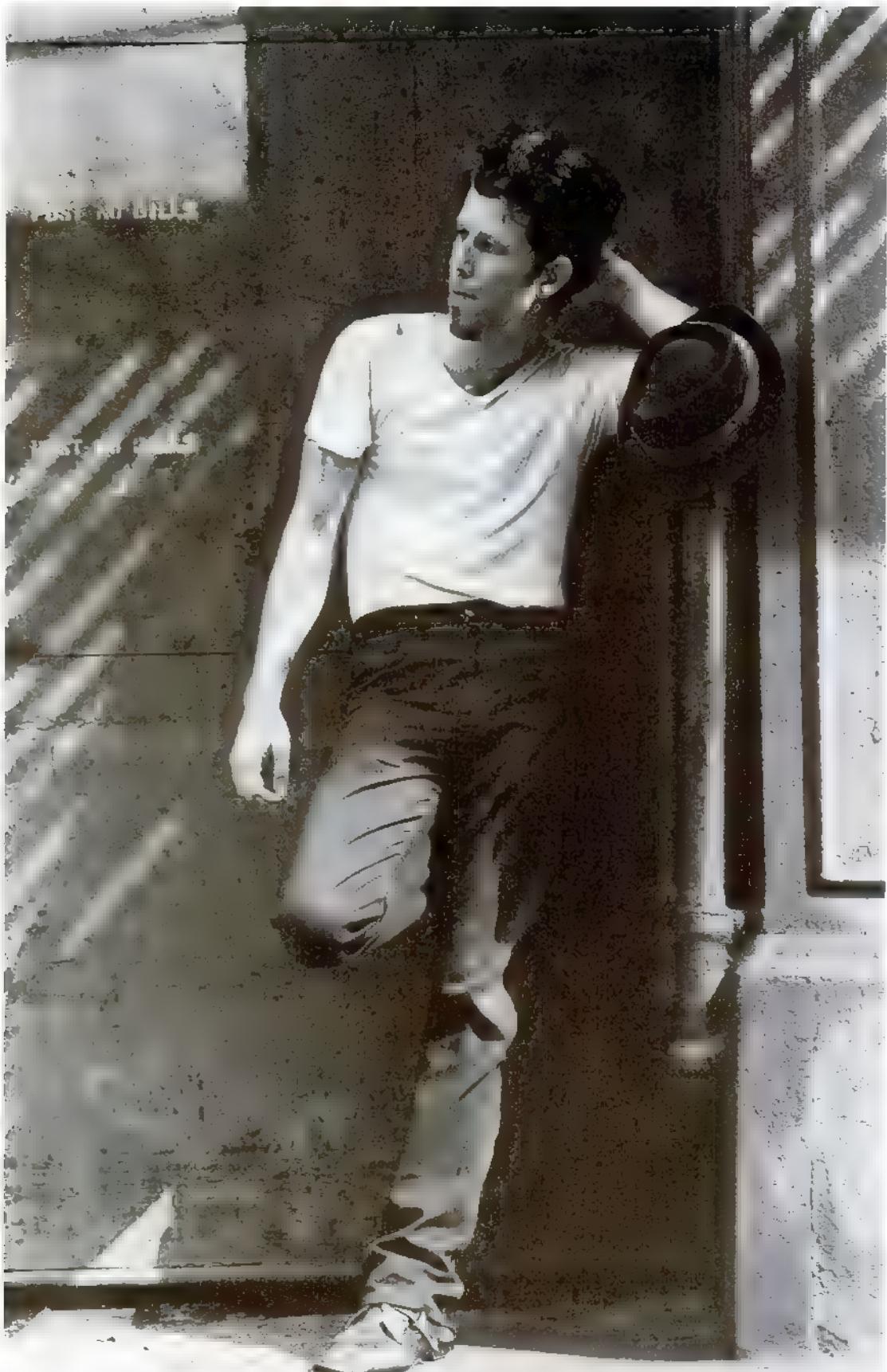
Yeah, they came to me first. The same offer, \$12 million, but they wanted me to be in it for one second. I said, "Forget it! Go ask Bruce."

Maybe they could get John Cougar. Unless his name identifies him too much with General Motors.

Honda offered me \$150,000 to do that commercial. That's twice what Lou got. They said I could write my own copy. Chevrolet! They won't leave me alone. Then a feminine hygiene commercial wanted me.

Summer's Eve Disposable Douche makes you feel fresh as a country lane?
Those were my lines! I just couldn't say them. I tried it so many different ways, I just couldn't make it.

Like Rocky.
It's hard, because we're so product-



oriented that our only real spiritual leadership comes from that angle, chasing the dollar. It's like it's OK if you get enough money for it. Selling out is alright as long as you get enough.

I don't hold the toilet paper commercial against Dr. John, though. There's a guy who deserves to make some money. But I don't know if he got enough!

I've heard that record companies are sick of paying for videos, so they're trying to get companies to pay to have their products displayed in them. Yeah, you see that all over in films now. Whenever they're in the kitchen you're going to see Nabisco. It's weird, though. You spend all this time on the road and then you realize that in a matter of seconds you can reach more people than you have in the last 17 years. That's a little hard to swallow.

How do you audition a road manager? Well, you take a couple of candidates out to the Mojave Desert and you leave the car by the side of the road and you walk for a couple of days, and when you get to a stream, the guys that want to drink from a cup, those are the guys you don't want. It's the guys that throw themselves headlong into the stream and just drink, those are best soldiers. What I'm really looking for, though, is an all-midget orchestra. They could all stay in the same room and on stage they could all share the same light.

What's your life like on the road? Well, you get up in the morning, along with millions of other Americans, and you go to the airport. You get to a new town. I go to the Chamber of Commerce as soon as I get in and talk to whoever is in charge. Sometimes I do. But most of the time you really don't know where you are. It's very possible that you may come out on stage and say, "It's great to be here in St. Louis" and you could very well be in Denver or Seattle. That's happened.

I really hate it when bands come out and say "Hello, New York." It's an arrogant remark, isn't it? Assuming that everyone of value connected with New York is there. I think it should be against the law for anyone to name a band after a city. Boston, Chicago, any of those.

And those state bands too: Kansas, Alabama . . . It's criminal.

I was so surprised when I found out that Oregon was a jazz band. Yeah, that's not right.

When I met you about two years ago you were just sort of visiting New York, and you've been here ever since. Was that a radical change. Being a New Yorker by accident?

We've moved eight times since we've been here. New York is like a ship. It's like a ship full of rats, and the water's on fire. People move to Brooklyn and say, "I feel isolated." That's insane.

This morning I was driving on the Long Island Expressway and I realized that if I was in L.A. that kind of thing would never happen, because there's no rivers to be on the wrong side of.

Yeah, people won't drop you as a friend if you live in Van Nuys or Santa Monica. You can't relate New York and what it requires of you as a citizen to remain civilized and cognizant and liquid . . . it doesn't relate to anyplace else in the United States. For what you're paying here to live, if you were in Iowa you could have an estate.

Have you heard any interesting bands lately?

Have you heard of the Pogues? They're like a drunk Clancy Brothers. They, like, drink during the sessions as opposed to after the session. They're like Dead End Kids on a leaky boat. That Treasure Island kind of decadence. There's something really nice about them. I heard another record called Robespierre's Velvet Basement by Nikki Sudden. That's something to listen to. There's Agnes Bernell. She's a German singer from the '40s who just made a record of a lot of her old songs. Elvis Costello was the executive producer. Her lyrics are great. "Father's lying dead on the ironing board, smelling of Lux and Drambuie." That's one of her first lines.

Are you doing any more movies?

I'm doing a picture in New Orleans in November with Jim Jarmusch and John Lurie. It's me and John Lurie and Bill Dana and Bob Wagner and Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr.

A Rat Pack movie.

*It's John Lurie and myself and this guy named Benini who's a really famous comedian in Italy. It's called *Down by Law* and it's about three guys in prison breaking out, through the swamps, through the bloodhounds. They're all innocent victims of blind justice. Then I'm doing a film with Robert Frank, who took the picture on the cover of this record. It's called *There Ain't No Candy Mountain*. It's going to be written by Rudi Wurlitzer and directed by Robert Frank. We're going to do it in the spring. It's about a guy like Les Paul who becomes really famous as a guitar designer and manufacturer. Then he completely abandons everything and disappears. And this young guy goes looking for him.*

Are you going to be the young guy? If it gets done according to schedule. Otherwise, I'll play the old-timer.

How do you write a song?

New York is really stimulating. You can get in a taxi and just have him drive and start writing down words you see, information that is in your normal view: dry cleaners, custom tailors, alterations, electrical installations, Dunlop safety center, lease, broker, sale . . . just start making a list of words that you see. And then you just kind of give yourself an assignment. You say, "I'm going to write a song and I'm

going to use all these words in that song." That's one way. Or you can get in character, like in acting, and let the character speak. The song "9th and Hennepin" came out like that.

Where's Hennepin?

*Minneapolis. But most of the imagery is from New York. It's just that I was on 9th and Hennepin years ago in the middle of a pimp war, and 9th and Hennepin always stuck in my mind. "There's trouble at 9th and Hennepin." To this day I'm sure there continues to be trouble at 9th and Hennepin. At this donut shop. They were playing "Our Day Will Come" by Dinah Washington when these three 12-year-old pimps came in in chinchilla coats armed with knives and, uh, forks and spoons and ladles and they started throwing them out in the street. Which was answered by live ammunition over their heads into our booth. And I knew "Our Day Was Here." I remember the names of all the donuts: cherry twist, lime rickey. But mostly I was thinking of the guy going back to Philadelphia from Manhattan on the Metroliner with *The New York Times*, looking out the window in New York as he pulls out of the station, imagining all the terrible things he doesn't have to be a part of.*

While other people are looking at New York imagining all the terrible things they can be part of.

When you see a leg come out of a cab with a \$150 stocking and a \$700 shoe and step in a pool of blood, piss, and beer left by a guy who died a half hour before and is now lying cold somewhere on a slab, you just take it all in. But it doesn't really apply anywhere else. I don't know how you go from New York to anywhere else. It's like being in a very bizarre branch of the service. "I was in for four years." I read that there's a barge that goes out into the Atlantic with all the limbs from all the hospitals, and it got into a storm and capsized, and all the limbs washed up on Jones Beach. People were swimming and all of a sudden things got a little odd, a little dark. You've got to love it here, though.

Is there anything you want to say to our readers?

*Maybe I should say something about the title of the album, *Rain Dogs*. You know dogs in the rain lose their way back home. They even seem to look up at you and ask if you can help them get back home. 'Cause after it rains every place they peed on has been washed out. It's like *Mission Impossible*. They go to sleep thinking the world is one way and they wake up and somebody moved the furniture.*

You've got a song called "Bride of Rain Dog." Is that the dog that's following the dog that's supposed to know the way back?

Yeah. That's the one with the hair that goes straight up, with the big bug eyes and the spiked collar and the little short skirt and no underwear.



I like music best on a bad speaker from a block away.







Cool is as cool does, and in this
first of a bitchin' brew on the man with the horn, we
discover the birth of the cool. Dig?

MILES STYLE

By me having a \$60,000 yellow Ferrari, being black, and living in a beachfront house in Malibu, the police have already stopped me three times," Miles Davis is saying, in that famous hoarse whisper of his. He bites down hard on his Danish, takes a long, deep drink from his Perrier bottle, and continues. "This happens all the time. They're always saying they thought I was drunk, that I was weaving all over the place. This happens especially at night on the Pacific Coast Highway.

"One time, my wife, Cicely, was asleep beside me in the car when they stopped me. When she woke up she heard them accusing me of being drunk. She told them I didn't drink. But they don't care about that. It's just racist. But we black folks know about that. It happens every day to a black person. It happens here just like it happens in South Africa.

"The police make me mad, and I never say the things they want to hear," Miles says as he arches another line in one of the drawings he is constantly doing these days, which have graced the covers of several of his recent albums. "I don't say, 'Yessuh, boss,' or 'I'm takin' the car to be washed and cleaned.' Shit like that. Man, 'cause the shit I be wearin' should tell any fool that I belong in the car! They ask me who I work for.

"I mean, a cop who has to work every day really be mad when what I'm drivin' costs more than what he makes in a whole year! You know what I mean? One cop, after askin' me to pull over, says to me, ' Didn't you see me behind you?' 'Naw,' I said. 'I wasn't lookin' behind me watchin' you. You watchin' me.' I didn't know he was behind me. I don't care if he's behind me. Fuck him!"

But the cops and Miles have been at odds more than once. He was arrested while sitting in his red Ferrari in a no-standing zone on Fifth Avenue in New York. The cop said he noticed that Miles's car had no inspection sticker and asked him for his driver's license. While Miles was looking for it a pair of brass knuckles fell out of his bag and he was arrested. Brass knuckles are illegal under the Sullivan Law. Miles said he carried the knuckles for protection; he had recently been grazed by a bullet fired by an unknown assailant. Another time he was beaten by a New York City detective for refusing to move from

in front of a club where he was playing.

"Policemen are weird," Miles says, screwing his dark face into a pained and quizzical expression of almost disbelief. "They do weird shit. They're like storm troopers. Shit, they even go to Germany on excursions to learn how to do more of the weird shit they do."

These concerns led Miles to record *You're Under Arrest* a few months ago, the closest thing to a pop record he's ever done. But then Miles has always been on the cutting edge of change in American music, and much of the time he has been highly criticized as well as praised for it. And now, as then, he doesn't seem to be listening to the critics, many of whose voices are raised in loud protest over the direction of his new music, but goes his own way, paying attention only to what his band members, trusted friends, and other musicians whose judgment he respects have to say. *Under Arrest* is a conceptual album, moving from a political statement musically to a concluding political musical statement. Included among these political concerns are Miles's human and musical responses to sometimes oppressive political actions. Thus, the pop ballads "Human Nature" and "Time After Time" from Michael Jackson's and Cyndi Lauper's latest albums are part of the musical fabric of *Under Arrest*. Both songs deal with love, touching, loneliness, and isolation. The album's first composition, "One Phone Call / Street Scenes," written by Miles, begins with the words, "You're under arrest. You have the right to make one phone call or remain silent, so you better shut up."

"See, on the song we're supposed to be snortin' coke. So I had my percussionist Steve Thornton say, 'We just came from Miami and that's our religion down there. We do this all the time, so you'd better shut up. 'Cause it's none of your business.' I had some special, real handcuffs for this recording session. You can hear them clickin' on 'Street Scenes,' and they really put those handcuffs on me!" He laughs at the memory. "I was interested in the recorded sounds of the handcuffs lockin'. I wanted that sound on the record because it happens to so many people all over the world."

Under Arrest's concerns progress from being locked up for being part of a "Street Scene" to being locked

Anthony Barboza

Article by Quincy Troupe

up politically and being subjected to the looming horror of a nuclear holocaust. Listen to the synthesizer boiling up and simulating the howling, flaming winds created by a nuclear explosion on "Then There Were None." Then listen to Miles' sad, lonely, and haunting trumpet, the "5, 4, 3, 2 . . ." countdown, a baby's wailing cry, the tolling of bells, and Miles at the conclusion of the recording saying, "Ron, I meant for you to push the other button."

Art as a mirror of society. The real world put down on vinyl as music. Miles, always on the cultural, musical, and artistic edge.

Miles comes from a politically conscious family. His late father, a prominent dentist and landowner in East St. Louis, Illinois, who once ran for public office, is from a long and distinguished line of Davises who were extremely proud of their heritage and didn't take shit from anyone.

"My father was a big influence on me," he says, pausing to think for a second, stroking his chin thoughtfully with his long, bony fingers, his normally fierce eyes softening for a moment at the memory of his father. "He taught me to choose what was important to me and not look back. Or care what anybody else thought."

And Miles has done that—chosen what was important for himself—for all of what is an amazingly creative and important musical career. His music and the groups he has led have changed jazz at least five times. But his influence extends beyond music. He affects clothing styles, fashion, the way people speak, their attitudes toward themselves and the world, the way they stand, the way they hold a drink, everything. Some people go to his concerts not to listen to the music but to see what he has on, the way he's standing that night on stage, the style in which he's carrying himself.

According to George Butler, who was Miles's executive producer at Columbia Records, the late Soviet head of state, Yuri Andropov, an ardent jazz fan and a fanatical admirer of Miles's music, once sent his personal limousine to chauffeur Miles around Poland when he was playing a series of concerts there. Andropov was then on his death bed and too sick to attend. But rumor had it that had he been well he would have been there.

Miles's grandfather, Miles Dewey Davis the first, was a successful bookkeeper and landowner in Arkansas in the late 19th century. He was said to be so good at bookkeeping that local whites came to him clandestinely to balance their books. Later, around the turn of the century, he was driven from his land by whites who grew jealous of such a smart and enterprising black man. Miles's father was wealthy, by black standards of the day. He had a city home and a country farm 20 miles outside of East St. Louis where he raised prize-winning pigs and where young Miles could retreat to hunt, fish, and ride horses, a passion that remains with him today.

Miles's father was a "race man" who favored Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa movement over the integrationist tendencies of the NAACP. These ideas were passed on to young Miles. Doc Davis once took a shotgun and went looking for a white man who had called young Miles a nigger (he couldn't find him).

East St. Louis, like St. Louis across the river, was a very tough town. While St. Louis closed down after midnight and didn't serve alcohol anywhere on Sundays, across the river, East St. Louis never closed.



"Miles protects himself with his arrogance," says Tony Barboza. "He intimidates people and they don't fuck with him if they don't know what they're talking about."

The clubs were wide open and gambling flourished.

Like New Orleans at the bottom of the Mississippi, St. Louis has always produced outstanding trumpet players. In both cities, riverboats ferried up and down the river, carrying outstanding musicians who made good livings playing for the passengers. Both cities have long traditions of brass marching bands and were home to some of the very top jazz trumpet players: Buddy Bolden, Louis Armstrong, Wynton Marsalis, and Terrence Blanchard, all from New Orleans, and Louis Metcalf, Levi Maddison, Harold Baker, Eddie Randall, Clark Terry, George Hudson, Davis, and Lester Bowie, all from St. Louis. So when Miles's father gave him a trumpet for his 13th birthday (his mother wanted to give him a violin; when this was rejected it was the cause of much friction between his parents), he was in a fertile area to grow musically on the instrument.

By his senior year in high school, Miles was already looking past East St. Louis and St. Louis. His teacher, Elwood Buchanan, had taught him to "play without any vibrato," because he was going to "get old anyway and start shaking," and to play "fast and light." He turned him on to Clark Terry, a friend and drinking buddy of his, and Harold Baker's playing. Miles began sitting in with Terry down on the Mississippi with riverboat musicians from New Orleans and playing in jam sessions all over St. Louis. Then Terry, Miles's idol, went into the Navy in 1942. Miles graduated from high school and joined the Billy Eckstine band at the Club Riviera in St. Louis. The band already included Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Art Blakey, who told Miles he should go to New York. Convincing his father to send him to the Juilliard School of Music, in 1945 Miles arrived in New York City.

Juilliard was only a cover for what Miles really wanted to do, which was to become a part of the avant-garde music scene that was happening in and around Harlem and 52nd Street. He was also looking for Charlie Parker. Miles found "Bird" after a short while, and they became fast friends and roommates. At 18, Miles had arrived. Soon, he was hanging out with Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Tadd Dameron, Thelonious Monk, J.J. Johnson, and Max Roach, among others. In 1947, Miles joined the Charlie Parker Quintet—the quintet of jazz—which included Max Roach on drums, Miles on trumpet, and Parker on alto sax. By this time, Miles had come under the influence of both Freddie Webster and Dizzy Gillespie. He was also developing his own voice on the horn, based on the St. Louis style of playing—spare and blues-based, but fast, clean, open, lyrical, bold.

Bebop was a revolution. It came downtown from uptown New York. From Minton's Playhouse, Lorraine's, and Small's Paradise in Harlem to the new midtown clubs of "The Street"—52nd Street. Parker, Kenny Clarke, Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk, and Gillespie experimented uptown, then brought the music downtown. Bebop was based in the small ensemble, with an emphasis on improvisation rooted in African rhythms and the blues. It was a rebellion against the stiff swing arrangements of the 1940s and had a direct influence on clothing styles and language. The literary Beat movement came directly out of bebop, as did many of America's top avant-garde actors and painters, such as Brando, James Dean, Montgomery Cliff, Jackson Pollack, and William de Kooning.

Max Roach, the legendary drummer, was then, like Miles, one of the many young, unknown musicians who were hanging around Harlem jazz clubs trying to find a place in the new music. "We both worked with Charlie Parker's band and were roommates on the road," Max says. "We were staying up all night and all day, looking for jam sessions, some place to play. New York was different then. We could run the streets until we all crashed. I mean, our main thrust was to be a part of the music scene. We had a little group of guys—Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Milt Jackson, Tadd Dameron, Bud Powell, J.J. Johnson, Thelonious Monk, Fats Navarro, and Miles—who were all about the same age, thought the same kinds of thoughts.

"The thing I always enjoyed about playing with Miles," Max remembers, "is that he always went his own way. It helped me to know that creativity was always out there. You see, Miles started playing differently back in those days. Every other trumpet player was so influenced by Dizzy—not that Miles wasn't influenced by Diz. But Miles decided he was going to do something else."

What he did, says Lester Bowie, is play "completely different from anybody else in his era. The way he plays his intervals, the way he plays through chord changes, that's what made him really different. Everybody else played sort of the same, up and down, musical passages, chord changes, in intervals of seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths, and sixths. But Miles plays in between all of that. He plays sideways. He runs through whole tunes sideways. It was really different from the way anybody else had ever approached the trumpet. It takes genius to come up with a different idea, a different way of doing something. Considering all the great trumpet players who had come before him, it took quite a bit for Miles to come up with a new and different approach. He was the innovator on the trumpet."

And if Miles was beginning to have an impact on the music world with his playing, he was also beginning to influence musicians and others with his great sense of style.



The cops and Miles have been at odds more than once. He was arrested once when a pair of brass knuckles fell out of his pack, even though he said he needed them for protection after he'd been recently shot.

"Miles was always real clean, even back then," his high school friend Ralagh McDonald recalls, "like most musicians. We all dressed up our hair, clothes, shoes, everything immaculate. This was our pride. When we walked on the stand, we wanted to be pretty. We wanted to act cool, be cool, play cool, play pretty, look pretty. So we all, Miles included, did that."

"I used to go to the pawnshop back in the old days," Miles muses when I ask him to define his style, "and buy a seconhand suit for \$20. Then I'd take the vest and put a ticket pocket on it. And then guys would say, 'Aw, man, you can do this shit because your old man's a doctor.' And I would say, 'Fuck you. He ain't buyin' this shit I got on!' My father was conservative. I had to buy him clothes, you know?"

"I used to watch guys, black musicians mostly, coming through St. Louis, I used to watch how they dressed, how they stood, how they held their horns. I could tell if a guy could play by the way he dressed, how he stood, and the way he held his horn. I mean, although I was influenced by the British style of dressin', you know, Fred Astaire, he had a little flair that I liked, Cary Grant, Walter Pigeon, people who looked like they belonged in their clothes, I always had to put a little black shit on everything I put on, you know what I mean? It was either in my shoes, or a little belt, something."

In the late 1940s, Miles's career was moving at break-neck speed and he was happy at home with his family. He had married his high school sweetheart, Irene, in 1943, and they had two children—Cheryl Anne, born in 1943, and Gregory, born a year later. (They would have a third child, Miles, Jr., in 1950, and Miles has another son, Jean-Pierre, from his second marriage, to Frances Davis.) Miles was playing with the most acclaimed jazz musicians of the time. He finished third in the Metronome jazz poll in the trumpet category, behind Dizzy Gillespie and Howard McGee. His landmark recording, *Birth of the Cool*, was right around the corner.

But there were dark clouds gathering ahead: heroin.

Heroin, for many musicians, was the drug of the day. Fats Navarro, Charlie Parker, Tadd Dameron, Gene Ammons, and Bud Powell were among the many well-known jazz musicians who had severe heroin problems. It would lead to the death of all of them. But Miles's addiction caught everybody by surprise. He was thought to be so clean, so disciplined, so middle class that many felt he could never fall victim to heroin. But there he was, up on the bandstand or sitting at the bar during a break, a cigarette with a long burning ash in one hand, a drink on the bar, nodding off and scratching, his eyelids drooping low as his elbows. Miles told Nat Hentoff that he got strung out on "smack" because "I got bored and was around cats that were hung. So I wound up with a habit."

Miles fell so low that he would do anything to get money to feed his habit. His father sent money to try to help him, but he spent most of it on drugs. His public playing became sporadic because of his increasing drug use and club owners' reluctance to employ him.

He turned to pimping to feed his drug habit.

"I was a pimp," Miles says. "I had a lot of girls. They didn't give all their money to me; they just said, 'Miles, take me out. I don't like people I don't like. I like you, take me out.' "

On one occasion, Clark Terry came across Miles on the street, looking down and out. "He was wasted," Terry said, "actually sitting in the gutter. I asked him what was wrong and he said, 'I don't feel well.' " So Terry bought him some food and took him to his hotel room around the corner. "You just stay here," Terry told him, "get some rest, and when you leave, just close the door."

Terry, who was playing with Count Basie's band at the time, was just about to board the band's bus to go on the road. "But," he says, "the bus was delayed longer than I'd expected, so I went back to the room. Miles had disappeared, the door was open, and all my things were missing. I called home, St. Louis, and told my wife to call Doc Davis to get Miles, because he was in bad shape and had become the victim of those cats who were twisting him the wrong way. But Doc Davis was very indignant. He told her, 'The only thing wrong with Miles now is those damn musicians like your husband who he's hanging around with.' He was the type of guy who believed his son could do no wrong. So he didn't come to get him."

Miles meandered all over the country causing bad scenes. He moved in with Max Roach in Hermosa Beach, California. After a few weeks, he had run up bar tabs at a club called the Lighthouse that he couldn't, or wouldn't, pay. After several arguments with the bartender one night, he started getting on Roach.

"But after the argument," says Miles, "Max gave me \$200, put it in my pocket, and said I looked good. It

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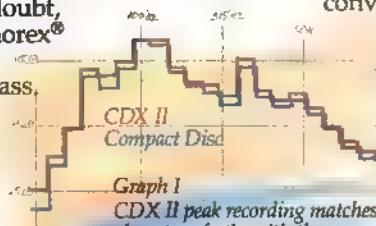
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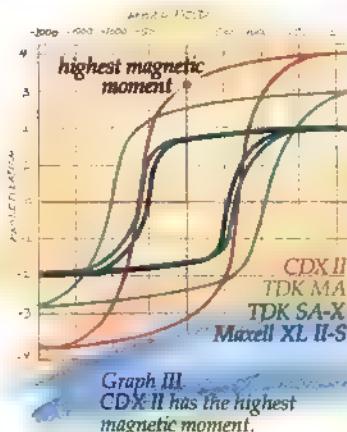


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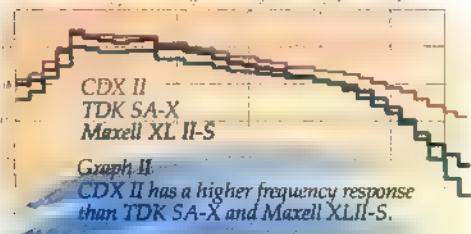
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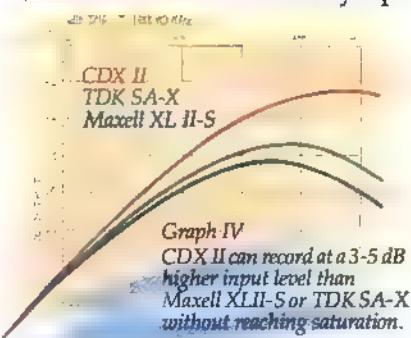
Graph II

CDX II has a higher frequency response than TDK SA-X and Maxell XLII-S.

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drug me so much. I said, 'That motherfucker gave me \$200, told me I looked good, and I'm fucked up and he knows it.' And he's my best friend, right? It just embarrassed me to death. I looked in the mirror and said, 'Goddamn it, Miles, come on.' So I called my father and he sent me a ticket back to East St. Louis."

He left immediately and found his father waiting for him. He told Miles, "You have to do this by yourself, you know that, 'cause you have been around drugs all your life. You know what you have to do." Miles immediately went and locked himself in his bedroom, stared at the ceiling, and cursed for 12 days.

"Sugar Ray Robinson, the boxing champion, inspired me to kick my habit," Miles says. "I said, 'If that mother can win all those fights, I can break this motherfucking' habit.' I went home, man, and sat up for two weeks and sweated it out. I laid down and stared at the ceiling for 12 days and cursed everybody I didn't like. I was kicking it the hard way. I lay in a cold sweat. My nose and eyes ran. I threw up everything I tried to eat. My pores opened up. Then it was over."

After a period of recuperation, Miles went to live in Detroit because the city had an impressive array of local jazz talent for him to play with and hard drugs were not as prevalent there as they were in New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles. When Miles finally went back to New York in the spring of 1954, many found him changed. Babs Gonzales, the famous jazz singer, said, "When he was strung out on heroin—and he's one of the very few who broke the habit all by himself, completely, without treatment—Miles was desperate enough to fall in with some pitiless people. Some of them exploited him musically, made him play for very little bread, but he needed that little bread. Also, the hoods who ran the jazz clubs in New York used to beat up on Miles and Bud Powell and other musicians who were strung out and in hock to them. Miles has always been a proud man, and while they didn't break him, they hurt him for a long time. Ever since then he's been leery about everybody. With exceptions—and they never know who they'll be."

"He thinks that most people are full of shit," says Tony Barboza. "But if he likes you he treats you like a brother, a friend. With most people he's very arrogant and tough. He protects himself with his arrogance. He intimidates people, and people don't fuck with him if they don't know what they're talking about. Here's a man who has lived his life and is a genius. But he's still a brother off the block. He can be angry with you one minute and back to laughing with you the next. And he's playful, too. But he needs one-on-one strength. That's why he fucks with people. It's like revitalization for him."

Miles's landmark *Birth of the Cool* (recorded during three sessions, two in 1949 and one in early 1950) marked him as a leader of a new generation of jazz musicians. Remarkably, despite his drug addiction, Miles had produced a number of great small combo albums, including *Blue Haze*, *Miles Davis and the Modern Jazz Giants*, *Bags Groove*, *Walkin'*, *Miles Davis Volumes 1 and 2*, *Relaxin', Workin', Steamin'*, and *Collectors Items*. He worked with the creme de la creme of jazz, and in all but a few instances, he was the leader.

In 1955, Charlie Parker died at the age of 34, succumbing to years of abusing his body with alcohol and drugs. Miles had kicked his habit and was back in the recording studio with a vengeance.

It was 1955, and Miles was on the phone, trying to find Sonny Rollins to be a part of his new band. The problem was that Rollins had become a desperate drug addict and had disappeared somewhere into the maze of Chicago's black South Side. When Miles finally caught up with him, Sonny declined his offer. That left Miles in a bind for a tenor saxophone player. He settled on a young saxophonist out of Philly named John Coltrane, an unknown and raw player who was the same age as Miles. Coltrane would become the most influential tenor saxophonist of his time. With Coltrane, Red

Miles's heroin addiction caught everyone by surprise. But there he was, up on the bandstand or sitting at the bar during a break, a cigarette with a long ash in one hand, nodding off and scratching.

Garland on piano, Paul Chambers on bass, "Philly" Joe Jones on drums, and Miles on trumpet, this group became the most important jazz quintet of its time.

Hamiet Bluiett, the renowned baritone saxophone player, recalls that Miles's music during that period was such an influence on him, he had to force himself to stop listening to Miles for a while so he could concentrate on his own music. "I worshipped every record Miles made. I couldn't wait to see what his new direction would be. Back then, jazz was on the jukeboxes, and if you were hip, slick, and advanced, you listened to jazz instead of rhythm 'n' blues. And you aspired to be like Miles."

Miles became a pacesetter in music, style, fashion, and attitude, the leader of a new generation of American artists that included Marlon Brando, Norman Mailer, James Baldwin, Jackson Pollack, Elizabeth Taylor, Harry Belafonte, and Sidney Poitier, among others.

"What Miles did for me and others back in the late 1950s and early 1960s," say Ron Milner, the highly respected playwright from Detroit, "was give us this cool arrogance. His attitude said that you could stand your own ground, do it your own way, that you had—if you looked for it—a singular, isolated self and that you could stand on it if you could pay for it. It was inspiring."

Miles Davis reigned as king of all jazz. His recordings on Columbia (he had switched from Prestige) were superlative, including *Milestones*, *Kind of Blue*, *'Round About Midnight*, *Jazz Tracks*, *Porgy and Bess*, and *Sketches of Spain*, which were notable for the brilliance of Miles's playing and composition. These recordings were the seeds of the fusion and avant-garde movements.

Although Miles was at the pinnacle of his success and popularity, he was beginning to get restless about the music he was composing, his own playing, and the makeup of his bands.

"The way I was playin' was kinda gettin' on my nerves," Miles says, pulling at the frazzled ends of his hair. These days he's wearing his hair straightened. It has grown thin on the top, and the way he wears it pulled back, showing off his high forehead and large, expressive eyes, can give him a severe look that hides his playfulness. "You know," he continues, scratching his chin, "it's like a favorite pair of shoes that you wear all the time. You got to change them. I had to change my music, my approach to it, you know what I mean? The way I played, what I played."

When Tony Williams, Herbie Hancock, and Wayne Shorter joined Miles and Ron Carter in the band in 1964, the change had a profound effect on American music.

"If we played a song for a whole year and you heard it at the beginning of the year, you wouldn't recognize it at the end of the year," says Miles. "Because the way the music was played had changed so much. Tony is a little genius. I had to react in my playing to what he was playing. And this goes for the whole band. The way we all played together changed what we were playing each and every night. And, man, it was great."

"I liked Miles's concept, especially with Tony Williams," says Olu Dara, the exciting cornet player, "because the trumpet and drums are like a family. A great trumpet player can make a drummer great by giving him space to play. Miles, because of his use of space, created a conversation with Tony. Call and response, an African thing. That was the greatest thing I had ever heard, those musical conversations between Tony Williams and Miles Davis."

It was so because of the playing and musical theories of one of the most misunderstood and maligned musicians of his time, Ornette Coleman, the alto saxophonist from Fort Worth, Texas, who had been laughed off many bandstands in the '50s and '60s by jazz luminaries, including Miles himself. But in the middle to late '60s, Miles began paying attention to what Coleman was composing and playing.

"The one thing Miles has always had is an almost perfect melodic order," Coleman says. "Melodic order is what I call the internal unison that everyone is looking for that makes them play their own voice. Miles discovered that he was playing four notes on his trumpet



Spencer Richards

when he played one. That's my theory of harmolotics. He discovered that Don Cherry was playing transposed saxophone solos on trumpet. This is what he discovered in my music that made *Bitches Brew* so successful. Miles added rhythm to the concept, and rhythm is what makes western music popular. He put the backbeat in and put the drums out front and on top, like in African music."

By 1969, Miles had had his first hip operation, divorced his second wife, Frances, married a young black singer and songwriter, Betty Mabry, and watched his popularity and record sales slowly decline. That year Betty gave a party at their Manhattan townhouse and invited all of her girl friends and Jimi Hendrix. Betty Mabry Davis's scene was the rock crowd, whose music now was the thing in America and the world. Coltrane had died in 1967. So the party at his home was geared to put Miles in touch with Hendrix, the uncrowned king of this new music. There was talk of a musical collaboration between them. But because of a prior engagement Miles could not attend the party. However, he left some music for Hendrix to read. When Miles called to discuss the music, he discovered that Hendrix couldn't read music. Though the collaboration never came off, Hendrix, a master user of electronics, had a profound effect on Miles.

"Jimi and I got to be friends. He used to come by the house," Miles says. "He wasn't a schooled musician, but he could play. I used to show him stuff. I like the way he played. He played natural. Like Sly Stone. They was both bad motherfuckers."

Both Sly and Hendrix, along with Coleman and the then emerging rock music, had an impact on Miles; he began to use electrical instrumentation extensively.

New musicians were showing up on his albums: pianist Chick Corea and bassist Dave Holland on *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, Joe (then Josef) Zawinul on electric piano and organ, and John McLaughlin on guitar on *In a Silent Way*. The band underwent an entire metamorphosis, with Lenny White, Jack DeJohnette, and Charles Alias all playing drums, Jim Riley on percussion, Harvey Brooks on Fender bass, Bennie Maupin on bass clarinet, and Larry Young on electric piano. These musicians joined with Dave Holland, John McLaughlin, Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea, and Joe Zawinul on *Bitches Brew*.

Bitches Brew was more than a forward-looking album; it was an event. "Miles wasn't prepared to be a memory—somebody to go and see because you used to dig him," says Dave Holland, then Miles's bassist. "He wanted to be somebody who appealed to the generation that's happening now. And he's always done this. He always makes music that goes right to the next generation."

"Bitches Brew devastated a lot of people," says George Butler, "because suddenly, here was Miles using electrical instruments, synthesizers, and R&B rhythms and incorporating all of that with jazz stylings. Many people were content just listening to *Sketches of Spain*, *Kind of Blue*, *Filles de Kilimanjaro*. Suddenly, Miles makes this drastic and dramatic musical change, and it was just really distressing to a lot of people."

Bitches Brew was released in 1970. By this time Miles was already experimenting in live performances with an electric piano, electric guitar, and electric bass.

But if *Bitches Brew* was a critical and commercial success, it was the beginning of the schism in Miles's audience that still exists. Many of his most loyal admirers turned off and tuned out his new music.

The albums that followed—with few exceptions—caused many critics to howl in protest. But Miles was reaching out to both a younger black audience and a young white rock audience.

To keep up with the changes in his music, Miles's fashions also underwent a remarkable transformation. Miles, who had popularized the "cool" look with his Italian and British suits, was now wearing mod threads, flowing African robes and shirts with fringes, knee-high leather and cloth boots, scarves, and tight-fitting leather jackets. It was still hip and ahead of its time, but it had



Anthony Barboza

been definitely influenced by the rockers.

He also took issue with the term jazz. "The more they used the word jazz," he says, continuing his feverish drawing, "the more people didn't want to hear that kind of music anymore. It's diminishing, because it don't mean anything. It don't do nothin'. I don't know what it should be called. Maybe it should be called social music."

Miles was now playing large stadiums and rock clubs. He was opening for Lauro Nyro and the Band, among others. The younger audience was groping with his new, free-form music. They were unfamiliar with the African rhythms he was playing. They were accustomed instead to rock's insistent drum backbeat and a rock-steady bass line (elements Miles would incorporate into his later music). But they hung with each other at the same time that many of the older audience had begun drifting away.

During the early morning hours of October 9, 1972, Miles, out for a spin in his gray Lamborghini sports car, crashed into a traffic island near 125th Street on New York City's West Side Highway, totalling the car and breaking both legs. On crutches, he began playing again in 1973 with a new band.

The music he was now playing had moved away from individual soloists and into a collective musical sound with multiple rhythms and textures. It was almost beyond western notated musical concepts, beyond transcription.

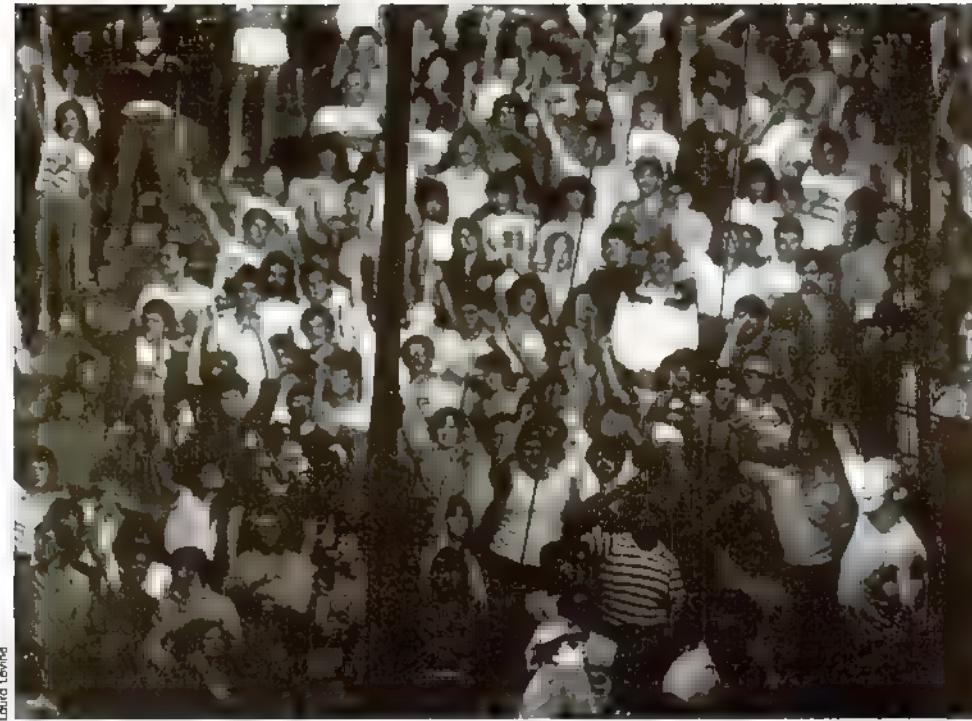
In 1975 he was rushed to a hospital suffering from pneumonia. Later that year he had a hip operation and received an implant. Cannonball Adderley, his old friend, died that year. And that year, Miles disappeared

from the music scene.

"Miles left because of a combination of things," says Max Roach. "When you're black and well known and you're in this business, you're never really compensated for what you have contributed to the industry. So during the course of your climb to fame and notoriety it can sometimes make you bitter, and you might get sick psychologically. I don't think Miles was so sick physically—though he was that too—as much as he was sick of the music business. Because if you're very sensitive and tough at the same time, like Miles is, and if you don't have to take shit economically—and Miles didn't—then you just forget it, like Miles did, for a while. But he was being monitored by Dizzy, myself, and others the whole time he was out. We knew what was going on in his life because one of us was always going by to see how he was."

Miles hardly ventured out of his house. There were persistent rumors that he had a large cocaine habit, that he had cancer, that he was hanging out in the early morning in numerous after-hour clubs. "I once saw him sitting outside his house when I passed by on my way to a photo shooting," says photographer Tony Barboza, who has been photographing Miles since 1971. "He seemed so sad. Really lost. It seemed like he was lonely, like he didn't have any close friends. I really felt sorry for him. After I left him, I just went into Riverside Park and cried and cried."

Next month: Deep in the throes of his decline, Miles again finds that glorious monster in the bell of his horn. In Part II, we hear the loud ring of his voice on Jagger, Wynton Marsalis, Hendrix, Sly, spiritism, and the sweet, sweet feel of being back and facing the danger of change.



Leora Levine

SPRINGSTEEN continued from p. 51

tour. How far can he go in refining, raising, and deepening his vision? Has he the resources (consciousness and commitment) to progress further or to at least maintain his pitch on some important level?

We should know by now that no artist, no matter how popular, can completely buck the forces of commerce, or his career, even his name, will disappear. We have seen Stevie replaced by Michael, who in spite of all his Victory has still been condemned for daring to try and make all that money. Prince and Boy George swiftly rose to Commerce's rescue.

The United States and the world at large are at a crossroads. Springsteen sings about one direction, though his songs are more reaction than concrete analysis or exhortation (one journalist, however, did mention Springsteen's "preaching" during his Jersey shows). A shouter such as Springsteen could easily become a significant ingredient of a critically important public drama, here in the U.S.A.!

—Amiri Baraka

How often, and how painfully, does Joe Strummer dream of Bruce Springsteen? Rock stars need press. The press needs rock stars. The relationship is ancient: the press is a barometer of a rock star's celebrity, and celebrity regulates his relationship with the public. Some—Bowie and Jagger, for instance—have actually turned this relationship into an aesthetic: their stardom becomes part of the content of their work. The punks tried to turn their backs on the process, and the few who achieved stardom became ironically immobilized by it.

Ever since his unprecedented and grotesque coronation as "the future of rock 'n' roll" 10 years ago, Springsteen has developed his audience despite, not because of, the media. His legend has only one source—the live show. Longer, more powerful, more cathartic than any other, it is the perfect medium for Springsteen's message. His work is about work

itself—reflected in his almost mythical depictions of the working man, his belief in the American work ethic, and the blood-and-guts vigor he and the band put into any and every performance.

His concerts don't bear comparison with other rock 'n' roll shows. The correct analogy would have to be more concrete: a tractor, a train, a pair of jeans—something durable, infallible, American made. The shows partake of the same mythology they illuminate, and it's that which elevates them, gives them transcendent power. Springsteen may not have the greatest voice in rock 'n' roll, but listening to him live you hear the best rock singer in America. And though it's essentially no more than a super-professional barroom combo, the Street Band can sound like the best rock group in the world.

Watching Springsteen can be like watching Robert De Niro act—it's the spectacle of star performer divorcing himself from his stardom. Whereas De Niro does it to make us believe in the character he's playing, Springsteen does it to make us believe in him, which, because he's a populist, is also his way of showing that he believes in us. In fact, he doesn't fulfill the function of a movie actor so much as he fulfills the function of movies. Asked once why his shows were so long, he replied that it was so his audience could see their whole lives pass before them. And that perhaps explains everything: he would be Everyman.

When he tells stories about himself, they're about everybody. You imagine that he's the first rock star who dreams of being his audience as much as his audience dreams of being him. It's a fair assumption that anyone who ever stood in front of a mirror with a guitar sees Springsteen as a projection of his own fantasies, but it's not something Springsteen invites. With his wobbly dancing, aggressively unglamorous wardrobe, and hesitant, vaguely hokey anecdotes, he so appealingly looks like he could use being taught a few moves by his fans.

If this appears insincere, it probably isn't; but is in fact a natural outgrowth of his songwriting. In 13 years, only his songs' scale has altered significantly; his themes have remained constant. The progression from *Greetings From Asbury Park* to *Born in the U.S.A.* is, as the titles suggest, a progression from

writing about the people he grew up with to an in some ways more abstract and in other ways more specific definition of them as American symbols. Now colored by a certain nostalgia, Springsteen's characters are still the embattled emblems of an old American dream, where the freedom to succeed usually turns out to offer the greater freedom to fail. Which theme, demographically speaking, unites Springsteen's audience and explains its range. He can speak for the dreams of youth and the soured reality of middle age equally and simultaneously. That a fabulously wealthy rock star, now allegedly making a million dollars a week and playing to 60,000 people a night, can pull this off is pretty extraordinary. Somehow, Springsteen makes us believe that his own conception of his work is sufficiently simple that there's no credibility gap between himself and his work, between his privileged status and his dreams—in effect, that there's no difference between him and his audience. Just as that giant, ageless voice seems to have rolled in from the dustbowls of Depression-era America, so his stage show appears idealistically bent on reviving the old, folksy troubadour tradition of Woody Guthrie and Jimmy Rogers. That is, as closely as arena-scale logistics allow.

What this achieves is a neat reversal of an old '60s cliche. If the '60s were supposed to be about the formation of a community that idealized rock music, Springsteen is the creator of a rock music that idealizes the idea of community. It's hardly surprising that he's been chased around the country by politicians looking for endorsements. His community must now be vast, a potentially powerful lobby—something much wider than the dissident, counterculture rock community of the '60s and much more entrenched within the working classes. Which makes it ironic that Springsteen is popularly included in the media's roll call of Americans restoring America's belief in America. As others have noted, there's a weird incongruity to "Born in the U.S.A." being accepted as some kind of surrogate national anthem (read the lyrics). The record, and Springsteen, are light-years away from the right-wing orthodoxy that has largely fostered this new brand of super-patriotism. He is perhaps the only major public figure presenting the flip side of the coin who's putting forward a cogent and realistic vision of America. He literally captures the times better than anyone else around.

But where does this lead him? Religion? Politics? He's already beyond rock 'n' roll in the sense that there's no one else within a measurable distance of him. So far his political activism has been confined to speeches from the stage and donations to workers and community groups in whichever town he's playing. What next? On his last tour, there were already signs of conflict between the stridency of his speeches and the lush romanticism of his songwriting, especially his early songwriting. If there's been a softness, a complacency, to his work in the past, it's here. As a romantic, he loves the characters in his songs so much that he never brings himself to criticize them. And as Everyman, he lets them, himself, and us off the hook too easily. We leave his concerts being critical of life, but not of ourselves. It seems to be something he's aware of: several of the *Born in the U.S.A.* songs and a new song, "Seeds," that he unveiled on tour are harder, more dogmatic, farther along the road than he's gone before.

And what does that mean? President Springsteen? Maybe not, but it opens up a range of possibilities. Among them the potential for being heard by a massive audience without having to work through the tyrannical stars-and-hype apparatus of the media, of celebrity. Because the truly extraordinary thing about Bruce Springsteen, whether one gets his point or not, whether one is fascinated or bored silly by him, is that he's the only public figure in America whom one never suspects of being a cynic, a crook, a con artist, or an aggregation of all three.

—Eric King

SPIN

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My Favorite Albums



by Henry Rollins

I remember now, it was May of this year. I was in my house in Malibu, relaxing by my pool, waiting for Mick and Keith to drop by. They were ten minutes late, and I was a bit vexed. The phone rings, some young blonde thing (whose name I forgot) brings it poolside:

—Hello?

—Henry baby?

—Yeah.

—This is Ed Rasen at SPIN.

—Eddie baby, good to hear from you, what's up?

—How about writing about your five favorite albums of all time?

—Sounds good, but remember, this month I leave to rock the nation for three and a half months, so it may take a while.

—That's cool.

—See you in New York, babe.

—Ciao, baby.

OK, let's bring this up to the recent past.

The date is May 27, 1985. I am sitting in the Main Street Saloon in beautiful Lubbock, Texas. No, it's not a desert island, but it's pretty close. I am surrounded by fat women playing pinball and WFMX-FM blasting the top 500. Soundcheck is soon. I have a tape of an album entitled *Fun House* in my backpack, but I have no way to play it. At least I can talk about it.

OK, so I'll talk about my No. 1 all-time favorite album, *Fun House*. *Fun House* is by a band called the Stooges. The Stooges were Ron Asheton on guitar, Scott Asheton (Rock Action) on drums, Dave Alexander on bass, Steve MacKay on sax, and Iggy Pop on vocals. *Fun House* came out in 1970 on Elektra Records. *Fun House* was recorded at Elektra Studios, then located on La Cienega Boulevard in West Hollywood, California—the same studios that the Doors recorded in, a few blocks down from the Alto La Cienega Hotel where Jim Morrison used to camp out, the same hotel where Janis Joplin died, just blocks away from

Play "Sister Ray" a few times and the bugs will leave your house and people will hate you forever.

the Whisky a Go-Go.

I can remember when I first heard of *Fun House*. It was 1980. I was living in Washington, D.C. I used to talk to Black Flag's bass player, Chuck Dukowski, on the phone every few weeks. He told me to check out *Fun House*. I never got around to it. Later that summer, I was in the band, and Chuck played it for me. I had never heard a record more raw, sexual, and powerful before in my life. Many records are great, fantastic, but usually not cohesive enough for me. To me a record must have a start, a finish, and a song-to-song follow-through in mood and intensity. An album with 10 good songs thrown on it can be good, but the effect is like 10 little waves bouncing your boat around as opposed to one big tidal wave that sinks you. *Fun House* is a monsoon.

Let's get into it, let's start from the top. The cover: twisted, flaming pictures of the band members, orange, yellow, black. Looks like hell, looks like the closing minutes of *Apocalypse Now*, looks like sex, looks like it's gonna burn your face off. So you put the record on the turntable, turn the record over, and "Down on the Street" comes grinding out of the speakers like a snake. The lead hits you and tries to pull your brain apart. "Loose" as in "I stick it deep inside/Cuz I'm loose-always" kicks in and you feel loose, loose enough to do just about anything. Now the first 10-15 seconds of "TV Eye" is one of the greatest moments in rock if you ask me. I find myself rewinding the beginning about five times straight before I'll get the whole tune run through. The scream right before the break sounds like it comes person-to-person from hell. "Dirt" smolders; that is the word. Yes. "Dirt" makes me feel good. I know where that song

comes from. End of side one. Crawl to the turntable, turn the record over and let it go. 1970 comes roaring out and you realize that this is 25 years old! Fifteen years ago these guys were raging on this groove, and people talk about Prince as some kind of wildman! I've got good news. Next song is "Fun House," an invitation to real sexual madness. Insanity is a turn-on. Brilliant. Last song—"L.A. Blues." This is the car crash, the atomic bomb, the end.

I have listened to *Fun House* more than any other record I have ever had. The more I play it, the more sense it makes to me. My fondest *Fun House* story: I was working at this construction site all by myself. I was doing busy work, moving 2 x 4's from one side of the slab to the other. The first 100 were stacked very nicely. I popped my *Fun House* tape in the blaster, and by the time "TV Eye" had run its course, there were 2 x 4's in the street, in the dumpster, and on the roof of the unfinished garage. Not a very pretty picture but it sure was fun.

Later, soundcheck just finished, a bunch of cowboys were sitting at the bar laughing as we were setting up. We played "Slip It In" and afterwards I yelled "It makes me happy to know that I can do this and you can't even read." They didn't say anything. After the next song I told them that we were the greatest band on earth. They left. Happy trails, see y'all in Texas.

Hi y'all, I'm now in Dallas, Texas. It's nearly 100 degrees here. I'm sitting on the basement steps of this big old theater that we are playing tonight. I arrived here this morning. I checked the local papers to see what was going on. I shall relate a passage from a local daily: "Black Flag is on tour and 7-11 managers nationwide are cringing as one. Why? Because Black Flag's lead vocalist Henry Rollins is a 7-11 fanatic and may be the world's leading authority on the all-night quick-stop chain. Rollins' latest dissertation on 7-11 was published in the June issue of SPIN magazine."

Great. As all of you probably know,

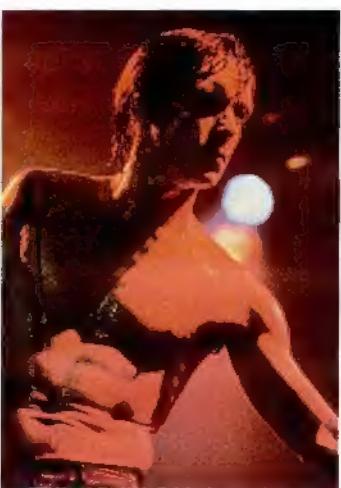
Southland Corp. is in Dallas, Texas. Southland owns 7-11. They are sending down a rep this evening to talk to me about maybe doing a commercial. Great. I went to a health-food store today to get some food. A woman by the take-out counter looked me over and asked if I had been in a car wreck. Thanks a lot, lady. I will be in Texas for the next few days. This is OK by me. People are usually pretty cool "round these parts."

Today I'm going to hip you on my other favorite album, *White Light/White Heat* by the Velvet Underground. *White Light* came out as the '60s were coming to a close. The band was led by Lou Reed, a man who has kept a fairly high profile in rock 'n' roll for around 18 years or more. Lou walked out on the Velvets in the early '70s, never to return. The man has since turned out more than a few solid, brilliant albums that grace my turntable frequently.

Alright, let's get into this thing. The overall sound of this record gives you the impression that these guys had it in for the record business. No songs about peace and love, more like songs about desperation, lust, gay sailors, questionable operations, etc. Smacks more of reality than other records of its time. Listen to "The Gift" on side one, where John Cale tells you the sad story of Waldo Jeffers, who misses his sweetheart so much that he mails himself to her (the young fellow is short on bones and his gal lives far away, so the U.S.P.S. makes good sense, dig?). What seems like the perfect ending to a wonderful reunion concludes with . . . you go buy the record and find out the end yourself! Oh yeah, don't forget to check out the leads on "I Heard Her Call My Name." Lou lays down some very wrenching stuff all over this disc. Side one, which features "White Light/White Heat," "The Gift," "Lady Godiva's Operation," and "Here She Comes Now," sets you up for the monster that waits on side two. Here comes "Sister Ray," a 17-minute war that will leave you drained. Play this a few times and the bugs will leave your house and your neighbors will hate you forever. Next time you are at a party, play this record and see what people do. I know what it makes me do.

Ed Rasen asked me to run down my top five albums. I gave it a lot of thought and trying to limit myself for last three made me go nuts. So I took two that have substantial impact on me and told you all about them. Now if I may, I would like to list some records and bands I play a lot: The Swans' Cop LP, their *I Crawled* EP, ANYTHING by Einsturzende Neubauten, all Diamanda Galas, Tex and the Horseheads, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, the Birthday Party, Jimi Hendrix, Lydia Lunch, Lou Reed, John Lee Hooker, Black Sabbath, the Meat Puppets, Trouble Funk, Sonic Youth, the Saints, Minor Threat, the Minutemen, Saccharine Trust, Saint Vitus, the Grateful Dead, Rites of Spring, the October Faction, etc.!

Oh yes, *White Light/White Heat* has just been re-mastered and re-released, sounds great, go get it.



Above left, Rollins; above, Iggy Pop

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